MAEN - 108 N

Major Trends and Movements in English Literature -I

उत्तर प्रदेश राजर्षि टण्डन मुक्त
विश्वविद्यालय, प्रयागराज

Contents

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INTRODUCTION TO BLOCK I

Dear learners! As we know English literature begins with the Anglo-Saxon Period. *The Anglo-Saxon period in Britain lasted from 410–1066 AD, and was a time when West Germanic people, also known as the Anglo-Saxons, settled in England.* This block is consists of four units. Unit 1 will introduce the students the evolution of English language and literature. The evolution English language is a fascinating tale that spans over a millennium. The unit focuses on the development of English language during middle ages. The second unit aimed to discuss first known generation of poets and their poetry in English literature. Anglo-Saxon poetry possesses a series of distinct poetic conventions that differentiate it from other poetic traditions, including a heavy use of kennings and a strange fusion of Germanic pagan heroism and Christian faith. The third unit discusses the literature of the Anglo-Norman period. Anglo Norman period saw a blending of French and English languages leading to the development of a unique linguistic and cultural environment. The chivalric literature and romance is one of the most significant literary innovations of Anglo Norman period. The fourth and last unit of this block deals Chaucer and his Contemporaries. The age of Chaucer which spans in the 14th century, was a period of significant literary development in English literature.

UNIT 1 EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Structure

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1.1   Introduction

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    1.2.1 Old English (450-1066)

    1.2.2 Viking invasions (8th-11th centuries)

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    1.4.1 Old English Literature (450-1066):

    1.4.2 Middle English Literature (1066-1500):

    1.4.2 Middle English Literature (1066-1500):

    1.4.3 The Renaissance (1500-1660):

1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit focuses on the beginning of English literature

- It deals with a brief history of the pre Anglo-Saxon, Anglo Saxon and the Norman periods
- To trace the historical development and evolution of the English language and its impact on English literature.
- To analyze the key periods and movements in British literature, examining the cultural, social, and artistic influences that shaped the works.
- To explore the connection between language and literature, emphasizing the significance of language proficiency in understanding and appreciating literary texts.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The unit "Evolution of English Language and Literature," seeks to present an engaging exploration of the dynamic journey that the English language and its literary traditions have embarked upon. This unit takes you on an insightful voyage through the annals of time, tracing the development of English from its humble beginnings to its global prominence today. From Old English's Anglo-Saxon roots to Middle English's transformative influences, it will uncover the linguistic shifts and historical events that shaped the language. Additionally, it will delve into the rich tapestry of English literature, from timeless classics to contemporary works, analyzing the social, cultural, and artistic forces that shaped their creation. Prepare to embark on an enlightening expedition into the captivating world of the English language and its literary heritage.

Historically, the English language primarily existed within the realm of the British Isles. Broadly speaking, it can be divided into three significant phases: Old English, Middle English, and Modern English. Considering the time factor, the earliest English speakers were foreigners, and consequently, the Old English they used is treated as any other foreign language. Old English literature mainly comprises the poetry and prose penned by the ancestors of the English, which serves as the foundation for the entire body of literary works produced to this day. Between Old English and Modern English lies a transitional phase known as Middle English, which exhibits characteristics of both Old English and other foreign languages.

1.2 EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The evolution of the English language is a fascinating tale that spans over a millennium. From its ancient roots to its present-day form, English has undergone numerous transformations, adapting to socio-political changes, and absorbing words from other languages, ultimately shaping the language we know today.

1.2.1 Old English (450-1066): The English language has its roots in the Germanic languages, particularly Old Norse, Old Saxon, and Old Frisian. Old English, also known as Anglo-Saxon, emerged in the 5th century as the language of the Anglo-Saxons, who invaded Britain from what is now Germany and Denmark. Old English was heavily inflected, with a complex system of declensions and conjugations. Famous literary works from this period include "Beowulf" and "The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle."

1.2.2 Viking invasions (8th-11th centuries): The Viking invasions of England from the late 8th to the 11th centuries had a profound impact on the English language. The Vikings spoke Old Norse, which had

many similarities with Old English. The two languages mixed, resulting in the simplification of English grammar and the incorporation of many Norse words.

1.2.3 Norman Conquest (1066): The Norman Conquest in 1066 marked a turning point in the history of the English language. The Normans, who were of Viking origin but spoke Old Norman (a Romance language), became the ruling class in England. This led to the development of Anglo-Norman, a hybrid language that combined Old English with Old Norman. The influence of Old Norman can still be seen in the English vocabulary, particularly in legal, administrative, and ecclesiastical terms.

1.2.4 Middle English (1066-1500): Over time, the Anglo-Norman language blended with the local Old English dialects, giving rise to Middle English. Middle English was characterized by a simplified grammar system, the addition of French loanwords, and a shift from Old English's elaborate inflectional system to a more simplified one. Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" is a prime example of Middle English literature.

1.2.5 The Great Vowel Shift (1350-1700): A major phonetic change occurred during this period, known as the Great Vowel Shift. Long vowels in Middle English underwent significant changes in pronunciation, which ultimately led to the modern pronunciation of many English words.

1.2.6 Early Modern English (1500-1700): This period saw the expansion of the English vocabulary through borrowing words from Latin, Greek, and other languages. The invention of the printing press in the 15th century also played a crucial role in standardizing spelling and grammar. The works of William Shakespeare and the King James Bible are iconic examples of Early Modern English.

1.2.7 The British Empire (16th-20th centuries): The growth of the British Empire helped spread English around the globe. As a result, English absorbed words from various languages, including Hindi, Arabic, and Chinese, enriching its vocabulary.

1.2.8 American English: The colonization of North America by English speakers and the subsequent development of the United States led to the emergence of American English. American English has evolved separately from British English since the 18th century, resulting in different accents, vocabulary, and spelling.

1.2.9 Late Modern English (1700-present): The Industrial Revolution, scientific and technological advancements, and globalization have all contributed to the continuous development of English. These factors have introduced new words and concepts to the language, making it more diverse and adaptable.

World Englishes: The widespread use of English as a global lingua franca has given rise to various regional varieties, known as World Englishes. These varieties have developed their own unique characteristics, including phonetic, grammatical, and lexical features, shaped by local languages and cultures. Some well-known examples of World Englishes include Indian English, Nigerian English, and Australian English.

English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL): The widespread use of English for international communication has also led to its widespread adoption as a second or foreign language. ESL and EFL learners have added to the richness and diversity of the English language, often bringing their own cultural perspectives and linguistic backgrounds to the language.

Technological influence: The rise of the internet and social media has had a profound impact on the English language. Text messaging, email, and social media platforms have created new modes of communication, introducing new words, phrases, and abbreviations. These platforms have also facilitated the rapid spread of slang and the blending of language varieties, contributing to the evolution of English.

The future of English: The English language will undoubtedly continue to evolve as it adapts to new social, cultural, and technological contexts. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, English is likely to absorb even more words and phrases from other

languages, further enriching its vocabulary. Additionally, the development of artificial intelligence and natural language processing technologies may also influence the future direction of the English language.

In summary, the evolution of the English language is a complex and ongoing process that has been influenced by numerous factors, including historical events, social changes, and linguistic contact with other languages. From its origins as a Germanic language to its current status as a global lingua franca, English has proven to be a remarkably adaptable and resilient language. As our world continues to change, English will undoubtedly continue to evolve, reflecting the diverse and dynamic nature of human communication.

1.3 DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE DURING THE MIDDLE AGE

The development of the English language during the Middle Ages can be divided into three main periods: Old English (450-1100), Middle English (1100-1500), and Early Modern English (1500-1700). In this response, we will focus on the Old English and Middle English periods, which cover the majority of the Middle Ages.

1.3.1 Old English (450-1100)

Old English, also known as Anglo-Saxon, originated from a group of Germanic dialects brought to the British Isles by the Anglo-Saxons, who were a collection of tribes from what is now Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands. Old English evolved and developed over time as a result of various factors:

Celtic influence: The indigenous Celtic population of Britain influenced the early development of Old English, particularly in terms of place names and loanwords.

Latin influence: The Roman conquest of Britain and the subsequent Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons introduced Latin vocabulary, especially in the realms of religion, scholarship, and law.

Norse influence: The Viking invasions and settlements in the 8th and 9th centuries brought Old Norse, a North Germanic language, into contact with Old English. This led to a significant influx of Norse vocabulary and grammatical simplifications in English.

1.3.2 Middle English (1100-1500)

The transition from Old English to Middle English began with the Norman Conquest in 1066. The Normans spoke Old Norman or Old French, which had a profound impact on the English language. The most significant developments during the Middle English period include:

Norman influence: The Normans introduced many Old Norman and Old French words into English, particularly in areas such as law, government, art, and cuisine. This influx of vocabulary led to a more extensive use of French loanwords and the development of a bilingual society, especially among the upper classes.

Grammatical changes: Middle English underwent several significant grammatical changes, including a decrease in inflections (word endings used to convey grammatical information) and the development of a more rigid word order. The loss of inflections resulted in a more simplified grammar, with a heavier reliance on prepositions and auxiliary verbs.

Literary developments: The Middle English period saw the emergence of significant literary works, such as Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" and the anonymous "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight." These works helped to establish English as a literary language and contributed to the standardization of English spelling and grammar.

In summary, the development of the English language during the Middle Ages was shaped by various historical, cultural, and linguistic influences. The language underwent significant changes in vocabulary,

grammar, and orthography, laying the foundation for the Early Modern English period and the English we know today.

1.4 EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

The evolution and development of English literature can be traced through a series of significant periods and movements, reflecting the historical, social, and cultural contexts of the times. In this overview, we will explore the major milestones in the evolution of English literature.

1.4.1 Old English Literature (450-1066): The beginnings of English literature are rooted in the oral tradition of the Anglo-Saxons. Works from this period, such as the epic poem "Beowulf" and "The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," are characterized by themes of heroism, fate, and the natural world. Old English literature also includes religious texts, such as "Caedmon's Hymn" and "The Dream of the Rood," which reflect the spread of Christianity in Britain.

1.4.2 Middle English Literature (1066-1500): Following the Norman Conquest, the fusion of Old English and Old Norman gave rise to Middle English. Literature from this period, like Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" and the anonymous "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," is marked by diverse themes, ranging from chivalry to everyday life. The works of mystics like Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe offer insights into the religious experience of the time.

1.4.3 The Renaissance (1500-1660): The English Renaissance was marked by a revival of interest in classical learni1.4.2 Middle English Literature (1066-1500): ng and the flowering of poetry, drama, and prose. Key literary figures include Edmund Spenser, whose "The Faerie Queene" is an epic allegorical poem celebrating the virtues of the English nation, and Sir Philip Sidney, whose "Astrophil and Stella" is a seminal sonnet sequence.

1.4.4 Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (1558-1625): This era is best known for the flourishing of English drama, with playwrights such as William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Ben Jonson crafting masterpieces that continue to be celebrated today. Shakespeare's works, in particular, have had a lasting impact on English literature and language, with his tragedies, comedies, and histories exploring universal themes like love, power, and identity.

1.4.5 The Metaphysical Poets (1590-1670): This group of poets, including John Donne, George Herbert, and Andrew Marvell, were known for their innovative use of conceits, paradox, and wit to explore complex themes of love, religion, and mortality.

1.4.6 The Restoration and the Augustan Age (1660-1740): Following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, literature in this period was characterized by wit, satire, and elegance. Playwrights like William Congreve and John Dryden produced comedies of manners, while poets like Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson excelled in satirical and didactic poetry.

1.4.7 The Rise of the Novel (1700-1830): The 18th century saw the development of the novel as a literary form. Pioneering authors like Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding used the novel to explore human nature and the complexities of society. Later novelists like Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott further refined the form, focusing on character development and social commentary.

1.4.8 Romanticism (1798-1837): Reacting against the rationalism of the Enlightenment, the Romantic movement celebrated the individual, emotion, and the natural world. Key Romantic poets include William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats, who championed the power of the imagination and the beauty of the natural world.

1.4.9 Victorian Literature (1837-1901): The Victorian era was marked by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and social change. Literature from this period addressed issues such as morality, social justice, and the human condition. Notable novelists include Charles Dickens, whose works like "Great Expectations" and "A Tale of Two Cities" critiqued social inequality; the Brontë sisters, known for their passionate and unconventional novels; and Thomas Hardy, whose novels focused on the struggles of rural life. Victorian poetry saw the works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning exploring themes of love, loss, and spirituality.

1.4.10 The Modernist Movement (1901-1945): Modernism emerged as a response to the upheavals of the early 20th century, such as World War I and the changing social landscape. This movement was characterized by experimentation, fragmentation, and a rejection of traditional forms and conventions. Key modernist authors include James Joyce, whose groundbreaking novel "Ulysses" challenged narrative conventions; Virginia Woolf, known for her innovative use of stream-of-consciousness; and T.S. Eliot, whose poem "The Waste Land" is a defining work of modernist literature.

1.4.11 Post-War Literature (1945-1980): In the aftermath of World War II, literature dealt with themes of disillusionment, existentialism, and the absurd. Writers like George Orwell and Aldous Huxley explored dystopian futures, while playwrights like Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter embraced the Theatre of the Absurd. The Beat Generation, including authors such as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, challenged social norms and celebrated nonconformity.

1.4.12 Postmodernism (1960-present): Postmodern literature is characterized by its self-awareness, metafiction, and a questioning of objective reality. Influential postmodern authors include Vladimir Nabokov, Thomas Pynchon, and Salman Rushdie, whose works often blur the lines between fiction and reality, play with language and narrative, and challenge conventional literary norms.

1.4.13 Contemporary Literature (1980-present): As we move into the 21st century, English literature continues to evolve and diversify. New voices and perspectives from different cultural backgrounds, genders, and experiences are enriching the literary landscape. Key themes include the exploration of identity, multiculturalism, and the impact of technology on society. Notable contemporary authors include Margaret Atwood, Zadie Smith, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, among many others.

In conclusion, the evolution and development of English literature can be seen as a rich tapestry of interconnected periods, movements, and styles. From its earliest beginnings in the oral traditions of the Anglo-Saxons to its current status as a global and diverse art form, English literature has continuously adapted and responded to the changing world around it, offering readers a window into the human experience across time and space.

1.5 TRENDS AND MOVEMENTS IN LITERATURE DURING THE MIDDLE AGES

During the Middle Ages, a period that spanned roughly from the 5th to the 15th century, literature went through several significant movements and trends. Here are some of the most notable:

The Epic: This is a form of narrative poetry that emerged in the Medieval period, often centered around heroic figures and grand themes. The most famous of these are Beowulf in Old English, The Song of Roland in Old French, and the Nibelungenlied in Old High German.

Hagiography: These were biographies of saints and religious figures. They were popular during the Middle Ages due to the prominence of the Church and religious devotion during this era. These texts often included miracles and heroic virtues to illustrate the saint's holiness.

Chivalric Romance: This genre emerged during the High Middle Ages and often revolved around themes of courtly love and knightly adventure. They were usually written in verse and included elements of fantasy and magic. Notable examples include the Arthurian legends (like Sir Gawain and the Green Knight) and Chrétien de Troyes's romances.

Mystery, Miracle, and Morality Plays: These were types of vernacular drama that were popular in the late Middle Ages. Mystery plays told stories from the Bible, miracle plays focused on saints and their miracles, and morality plays used allegorical characters to illustrate moral lessons.

Allegory: This was a popular literary technique in the Middle Ages, where characters and events represented moral, religious, or social ideas. Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy is a famous example, as is Geoffrey Chaucer, which uses complex allegories to represent a journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise.

Gothic Literature: Although the Gothic literature as we understand it today mainly developed later, during the 18th and 19th centuries, its roots can be traced back to the Medieval period. The term "Gothic" originally referred to the Goths, and later to the medieval period, which was perceived as dark, uncivilized, and full of supernatural elements.

The Middle Ages were a dynamic period of literary experimentation and evolution, shaped by social, political, and religious changes. The literary movements and trends of this era laid the groundwork for the explosion of literary creativity that would come with the Renaissance and later periods.

1.6 LET'S US SUM UP

In this unit, you gained a comprehensive understanding of how English has transformed from its early origins to its current global prominence. You explored the development of Old English, Middle English, and Modern English, recognizing the influence of historical events such as the Norman Conquest and the Renaissance on the language's growth. The unit also highlights significant literary periods, including the medieval era, the Elizabethan Age, the Romantic and Victorian periods, and the emergence of modernist and postmodernist movements.

Through this study, you grasp how English evolved not only through linguistic changes—such as shifts in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation—but also through cultural and intellectual advancements that shaped literary traditions. Key literary figures and movements are contextualized within the broader evolution of the language, illustrating how literature reflects societal shifts and philosophical ideas over time.

Now, you are able to identify the major phases of English language development, recognize the impact of historical and cultural forces on literature, and appreciate the dynamic nature of English as both a linguistic and literary entity that continues to evolve in the present day.

1.7 QUESTIONS

1. What are the key differences between Old English, Middle English, and Modern English, and how did historical events contribute to these changes?

2. How did the Norman Conquest influence the development of the English language and its vocabulary?

3. Describe the major literary movements during the evolution of English literature, from the medieval period to the modern era, and their impact on English literature.

4. In what ways did the Renaissance contribute to the growth and expansion of the English language and literature?

5. How have societal and cultural changes influenced the evolution of English literature?

1.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

"A History of English Literature" by Michael Alexander

"The Norton Anthology of English Literature" edited by M.H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt

"The Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature" edited by Pat Rogers

"The Cambridge History of English Literature" edited by A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller

"The English Novel: An Introduction" by Terry Eagleton

"The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English" edited by Peter France and Stuart Gillespie

"The Literature of the English Renaissance" by Kenneth Muir

"The Romantic Movement in English Poetry" by Arthur Symons

"English Literature a Survey for Students" by Burgess, Anthony

"Longman Companion to English Literature" by Gillie, Christopher

"The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales" by F.N. Robinson

UNIT 2 FIRST KNOWN GENERATION OF POETS OF ENGLISH LITERATURE AND THEIR POETRY

Structure

2.0   Objectives

2.1   Introduction

2.2   Socio Political Background of Anglo-Saxon Period

    2.2.1 Tribal Societies and Kingdoms

    2.2.2   Kinship and Social Hierarchy

    2.2.3   Witan and Local Government

    2.2.4   Law and Custom

2.3   Dark Ages or Early Medieval Period

2.4   The Poets and Poetry During Anglo-Saxon Period

    2.4.1   Cædmon (7th century)

    2.4.2   The Venerable Bede (673-735)

    2.4.3   Cynewulf (8th-9th century)

    2.4.4   The Beowulf Poet (Unknown)

    2.4.5   The Dream of the Rood Poet (Unknown)

    2.4.6   Wulfstan (960-1023)

    2.4.7   The Exeter Book Poet (Unknown)

    2.4.8   The Junius Manuscript Poet (Unknown)

    2.4.9   The Vercelli Book Poet (Unknown)

2.5   Let Us Sum Up

2.6   Questions

2.7   Suggested Readings

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, the learners will be able:

- To examine the historical context and cultural milieu in which the first known generation of poets of English literature emerged, understanding the societal factors that influenced their poetic expression.
- To analyze the major themes and motifs present in the poetry of the first known generation of English poets, exploring the ways in which they grappled with love, nature, spirituality, and other significant aspects of human existence.
- To evaluate the stylistic and poetic techniques employed by these poets, investigating the use of meter, rhyme, imagery, and other literary devices that shaped their distinctive poetic voices.
- To trace the influence of the first known generation of poets on subsequent periods of English literature, examining their impact on poetic traditions, themes, and forms that continued to evolve in later centuries.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The unit, "First Known Generation of Poets of English Literature and their Poetry" deals the socio-political and literary background of the Anglo-Saxon Period which is known as the early period of English literature. It embarks on a journey back in time to uncover the beginnings of English literature and the pioneering poets who laid its foundations. From the emergence of the English language as a literary medium to the remarkable works produced by the earliest known poets, it will delve into the rich tapestry of verse that emerged during this formative period. By delving into the lives, themes, and poetic techniques employed by these visionary poets, it aims to gain a deeper understanding of their significant contributions to the development of English literature. Prepare to immerse yourself in the enchanting world of these trailblazing wordsmiths and their timeless poetry.

2.2 SOCIO POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD

The Anglo-Saxon Period, also known as the Early English Period, spans from the 5th century to the Norman Conquest in 1066. This era is marked by the migration of Germanic tribes, such as the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, to the British Isles, and the subsequent formation of several distinct kingdoms. The socio-political landscape of the Anglo-Saxon Period was characterized by the following aspects:

2.2.1 TRIBAL SOCIETIES AND KINGDOMS

The Anglo-Saxon Period began with the migration and settlement of Germanic tribes in the British Isles, displacing the native Celtic Britons. As these tribes established their presence, they formed several small, independent kingdoms, including Wessex, Mercia, Northumbria, East Anglia, Essex, Sussex, and Kent. Over time, these kingdoms vied for power and territory, leading to a dynamic political landscape marked by shifting alliances and conflicts.

2.2.2 KINSHIP AND SOCIAL HIERARCHY

The Anglo-Saxon society was organized around kinship and loyalty to the local chieftain or king. The social structure was hierarchical, with the king and his warriors (thegns) at the top, followed by freemen (ceorls) who owned land and had various rights, and then slaves or serfs at the bottom. Loyalty and the exchange of gifts played a crucial role in maintaining social order and establishing bonds between the king and his subjects.

2.2.3 WITAN AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Anglo-Saxon kings were advised by a council of nobles and clergy known as the Witan, which played a significant role in the decision-making process on matters such as succession, land disputes, and legislation. Local government was organized around shires (counties), which were further divided into hundreds (administrative subdivisions). Each shire was governed by an ealdorman, while hundreds were overseen by reeves.

2.2.4 Law and Custom

The Anglo-Saxon legal system was based on a combination of customary law and royal decrees. Laws were not uniformly enforced across the various kingdoms, and local customs often held sway. Nevertheless, the concept of "weregild" (man-price) was an essential aspect of the legal system, as it required the payment of compensation to the victim or their family in cases of injury or death.

Religion: Paganism was the dominant religion during the early Anglo-Saxon Period, with gods such as Woden, Thunor, and Tiw being worshiped. However, the arrival of St. Augustine in 597 led to the gradual conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. By the 7th century, Christianity had become the dominant religion, and the construction of churches and monasteries began in earnest. The Christian Church played a vital role in shaping the socio- political landscape of the time, as it became a unifying force and an essential source of education and literacy.

Viking Invasions: The late Anglo-Saxon Period was marked by Viking invasions from Scandinavia, which began in the late 8th century. These invasions led to the occupation of significant parts of England, particularly in the north and east, resulting in the establishment of the Danelaw, a region under Viking control. The threat of Viking invasions led to the development of defensive measures, such as fortified towns known as burhs, and a more centralized system of governance under King Alfred the Great of Wessex.

Emergence of a Unified England: As the Viking invasions continued, King Alfred the Great of Wessex and his successors managed to resist the threat and gradually reclaim territories from the Vikings. Alfred's grandson, King Æthelstan, is considered the first king to have ruled over a unified England. Under his reign, the process of consolidation and centralization of power continued, eventually leading to the formation of a single political entity.

Language and Literature: The Anglo-Saxon Period saw the development of Old English, a Germanic language that evolved from the dialects of the migrating tribes. The growth of Christianity led to the spread of Latin, which was used for religious texts and scholarly works. This period is marked by the production of significant literary works, such as the epic poem "Beowulf," elegiac poems like "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer," and the historical chronicle "The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle."

Art and Craftsmanship: The Anglo-Saxon society was known for its skilled craftsmanship, particularly in metalwork, stone carving, and manuscript illumination. Artistic styles blended Germanic, Celtic, and Christian influences, resulting in unique expressions of art and design, such as the intricate patterns seen in the Staffordshire Hoard or the interlaced motifs of the Lindisfarne Gospels.

Trade and Economy: The Anglo-Saxon economy was primarily agrarian, with most of the population engaged in farming and livestock rearing. Trade networks extended across Europe, with trade centers like London, Southampton, and York playing crucial roles in the exchange of goods, including textiles, pottery, and metalwork.

In conclusion, the socio-political background of the Anglo-Saxon Period was characterized by a dynamic interplay of tribal societies, shifting power dynamics among kingdoms, the development of local governance, and the influence of the Christian Church. The evolution of tribal societies into a unified kingdom is the influence of the Christian Church, local governance, and a rich cultural and artistic heritage. The period laid the groundwork for the emergence of England as a distinct political and cultural entity, with a legacy that continues to shape the nation's identity to this day. This period laid the

foundation for the emergence of a unified England in the centuries to come, shaping the nation's political, social, and cultural identity.

2.3 DARK AGES OR EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The term "Dark Ages" is often used to describe the early medieval period, roughly from the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century to the beginning of the High Middle Ages in the 11th century. This label originated in the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, when scholars and intellectuals looked back on the preceding centuries as a time of intellectual and cultural stagnation, in contrast to the achievements of the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome. There are several reasons why the early medieval period has been perceived as the "Dark Ages":

Loss of Knowledge and Learning: The fall of the Western Roman Empire led to the decline of many aspects of classical civilization, including the loss of libraries, schools, and other institutions of learning. As a result, literacy rates dropped, and much of the knowledge from the classical period was either lost or not widely disseminated.

Political Instability: The early medieval period was characterized by political fragmentation and frequent conflicts between various groups, such as the Germanic tribes that filled the power vacuum left by the fall of Rome. This lack of political stability made it difficult for centralized governments and institutions to develop and promote intellectual and cultural advancement.

Economic Decline: The collapse of the Western Roman Empire also led to a decline in trade and urbanization, which had a negative impact on the economy. As a result, the standard of living for many people dropped, and the focus shifted from intellectual pursuits to more immediate concerns, such as agriculture and subsistence.

Limited Artistic and Architectural Achievements: Compared to the classical period and the later Renaissance, the early medieval period saw fewer major achievements in the fields of art and architecture. This perception has contributed to the notion of the "Dark Ages" as a time of cultural stagnation.

It is important to note, however, that the term "Dark Ages" has become increasingly controversial among historians and scholars in recent years. Many argue that the label is both misleading and Eurocentric, as it overlooks the significant cultural, intellectual, and technological developments that took place during this period. For example, the early medieval period saw the rise of monasticism, which preserved and promoted learning and scholarship, as well as advancements in agriculture, such as the three-field crop rotation system.

Moreover, while Europe may have experienced a decline in some areas, other parts of the world, such as the Islamic Golden Age and the Chinese Tang Dynasty, were thriving culturally and intellectually during this time.

In light of these considerations, many historians now prefer to use the term "Early Middle Ages" or "Early Medieval Period" instead of "Dark Ages" to describe this era, in order to avoid perpetuating misconceptions and negative stereotypes.

2.4 THE POETS AND POETRY DURING ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD

The first known generation of poets in English literature, often referred to as the Anglo-Saxon or Old English period, spans from the 5th to the 11th centuries. This era was marked by the development of a distinct English culture and language, following the invasion of Germanic tribes – the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes – who settled in Britain. Poetry from this period was rooted in oral tradition, as the written form of the Old English language had not yet been fully developed. The poetry of this era is characterized by its alliterative verse, vivid imagery, and themes that often revolve around heroism, religion, and the natural world.

2.4.1 Cædmon (7th Century)

Cædmon is the earliest known English poet. An Anglo-Saxon herdsman and lay brother at the monastery of Whitby, he is said to have miraculously discovered his poetic gift after experiencing a vision in which he was commanded to sing. His only surviving work, "Cædmon's Hymn," is a short, nine-line poem that praises God as the creator of the universe. This hymn not only marks the beginning of English poetry but also serves as an important example of the integration of christian themes into anglo-saxon literature.

2.4.2 The Venerable Bede (673-735)

Bede is also known as Saint Bede or Bede the Venerable, was an English monk, scholar, and historian who lived during the Anglo-Saxon period. He is best known for his work "Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum" (Ecclesiastical History of the English People), which earned him the title "Father of English History." Bede was a prolific writer and a key figure in the development of English scholarship during the early Middle Ages. Bede was born around 673 in what is now modern-day Northumbria, England. At the age of seven, he was sent to the monastery of Wearmouth to receive an education under the tutelage of Abbot Benedict Biscop. Later, he moved to the twin monastery of Jarrow, where he spent the majority of his life. Bede took monastic vows and was ordained as a priest at the age of 19. As a monk, Bede devoted

his life to prayer, study, and writing. He had access to an extensive library at the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, which allowed him to study a wide range of subjects, including theology, history, astronomy, Latin, and Greek. This education enabled him to become one of the most learned scholars of his time.

2.4.3 Cynewulf (8th -9th Century)

Cynewulf is one of only a few Anglo-Saxon poets whose name is known. He is the author of four Old English poems: "Christ," "Juliana," "Elene," and "The Fates of the Apostles." These works are characterized by their religious themes and allegorical narratives. Cynewulf's poetry is known for its intricate structure, alliteration, and vivid imagery.

2.4.4 The Beowulf (Poet Unknown)

"Beowulf" is the most famous work of Old English literature and the earliest extant long-form poem in the language. The author of "Beowulf" remains unknown, and the poem itself was likely composed between the 8th and early 11th century. This epic poem follows the hero Beowulf as he battles the monstrous Grendel, Grendel's mother, and finally, a deadly dragon. The story weaves elements of history, legend, and Christian allegory, illustrating the blend of pagan and Christian beliefs that characterized the Anglo-Saxon period.

2.4.5 The Dream of the Rood (Poet Unknown)

"The Dream of the Rood" is a unique Old English poem that presents the story of Christ's crucifixion from the perspective of the cross itself. The poet is unknown, but the poem is believed to have been composed in the 8th or 9th century. This work is an excellent example of the Christianization of Anglo-Saxon poetry, as it uses traditional heroic imagery to depict Christ as a victorious warrior.

2.4.6 Wulfstan (960-1023)

Wulfstan was an archbishop, homilist, and poet during the late Anglo- Saxon period. His most famous work, "Sermo Lupi ad Anglos," is a passionate sermon addressing the moral decline of the English people and the need for repentance. While this piece is primarily prose, it features poetic elements, such as alliteration and vivid imagery, characteristic of Old English verse.

2.4.7 The Exeter Book (Poet Unknown)

The Exeter Book is an anthology of Old English poetry compiled around the late 10th century. The poet or poets who contributed to this collection remain unknown, but the poems within the book are

diverse in both form and content, showcasing various styles of Anglo-Saxon poetry. Notable poems include "The Wanderer," "The Seafarer," "Deor," "Widsith," and a variety of riddles and elegies. These works explore themes such as exile, loss, heroism, and the natural world, often featuring a melancholic tone.

2.4.8 The Junius Manuscript (Poet Unknown)

The Junius Manuscript, also known as the "Cædmon Manuscript," is a collection of four Old English poems, attributed to an unknown poet or poets. These poems include "Genesis," "Exodus," "Daniel," and "Christ and Satan." Although the manuscript is named after the Dutch scholar Franciscus Junius, who published it in the 17th century, there is no direct link between Junius and the composition of the poems. The works within the Junius Manuscript are characterized by their biblical themes, vivid imagery, and allegorical storytelling.

2.4.9 The Vercelli Book (Poet Unkown)

The Vercelli Book is a manuscript containing a mixture of Old English poetry and prose, dating from the late 10th century. The poet or poets responsible for the works in this collection are unknown. Notable poems include "Andreas," "The Fates of the Apostles," "Soul and Body," "Elene," and several homilies. These works often explore themes related to Christian faith and morality, heroism, and the struggle between good and evil.

These early poets laid the foundation for English literature, showcasing the rich cultural tapestry of the Anglo-Saxon period. Their works have shaped the language and themes of subsequent generations of poets, continuing to inspire and influence English poetry even today.

Note: Middle English Literature (1066-1500): Middle English literature emerged after the Norman Conquest in 1066 and lasted until the late 15th century. This period saw a shift from Old English to Middle English, reflecting the blending of Anglo-Saxon and Norman cultures. Middle English literature incorporated both English and French influences, resulting in a rich literary tradition that featured various themes, genres, and styles. The early part of Middle English Literature is also known and Anglo-Norman period while the later part is known as Later Medieval Period which lasts in 15th century.

2.5 LET'S US SUM UP

In this unit you (learners) gained an understanding of the foundational figures who shaped early English poetry. The unit explores the contributions of key poets from the Anglo-Saxon period through the Middle Ages, such as Caedmon, the first known English poet, and the influence of other important figures like Geoffrey Chaucer. Through these poets' works, learners examined the themes, forms, and linguistic characteristics of early English poetry, including the use of alliteration, oral traditions, and the religious and cultural influences that shaped their writing.

By studying these poets, you developed an appreciation for how early English poetry reflected the social, religious, and political contexts of its time. You also explored how these poets laid the groundwork for later literary developments, influencing the progression of English literature as a whole.

Now, you are able to identify key poets from the first generation of English literary history, understand the thematic and structural elements of their poetry, and recognize how their works contributed to the evolution of English poetry.

2.6 QUESTIONS

1. Who was Caedmon, and why is he considered the first known poet of English literature? What were the themes of his poetry?

2. How did the religious and cultural context of the Anglo-Saxon period influence the poetry of early English poets?

3. Discuss Geoffrey Chaucer's contribution to early English poetry. How did his works shape the development of English literature?

4. What are the key characteristics of early English poetry, such as alliteration and oral tradition, and how were these techniques used by the first poets?

5. How did the themes and forms used by the first generation of English poets influence later poets and the broader evolution of English literature?

2.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

"A History of English Literature" by Michael Alexander

"The Norton Anthology of English Literature" edited by M.H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt

"The Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature" edited by Pat Rogers

"The Cambridge History of English Literature" edited by A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller

"The English Novel: An Introduction" by Terry Eagleton

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"Longman Companion to English Literature" by Gillie, Christopher

"The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales" by F.N. Robinson

UNIT 3 LITERATURE OF ANGLO-NORMAN PERIOD

Structure

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, the learners will be able :

- To explore the historical and cultural context of the Anglo-Norman period, understanding the impact of the Norman conquest on English society and the subsequent fusion of Anglo-Saxon and French literary traditions.

- To analyze the major literary genres and forms prevalent during the Anglo-Norman period, including epic poetry, romances, religious texts, and historical chronicles, examining their themes, structures, and narrative techniques.

- To examine the interplay between Anglo-Saxon and French influences in Anglo- Norman literature, identifying elements of both traditions and analyzing their integration and adaptation within the literary works of the period.

- To investigate the social and political functions of literature during the Anglo-Norman period, exploring how literary texts were used to express power, transmit cultural values, and shape the identity of the ruling elite.

- To evaluate the lasting impact of the Anglo-Norman literary tradition on subsequent periods of English literature, tracing the influence of key works and themes from the period, and understanding their contributions to the broader development of English literary heritage.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The unit "Literature of the Anglo-Norman Period" offers an immersive survey into a pivotal era in English literature. Diving deep into the time frame from the 11th to the 13th centuries, it will unravel the socio-political shifts that influenced the period of time. This period, marked by the integration of French and English cultures following the Norman Conquest, yielded unique literary amalgamations. Through examining prominent texts, the unit explores key themes, stylistic elements, and the influence of courtly culture and religion on literature. The Anglo-Norman period, characterized by the influence of the Norman conquest of England, witnessed a unique fusion of Anglo-Saxon and French cultures, resulting in a rich and vibrant literary landscape. From epic poems and romances to religious texts and historical chronicles, we will unravel the diverse literary works produced during this era. This unit invites you on a historical literary journey, blending language study with cultural context.

3.2 SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF ANGLO-NORMAN PERIOD

The Anglo-Norman Period, also known as the Norman Conquest, spans from 1066 to the mid- 12th century in England. This era was marked by significant socio-political changes that arose from the Norman invasion led by Duke William of Normandy, who later became William the

Conqueror. The conquest of England by the Normans had a profound impact on the country's social, political, and cultural landscape, which can be observed in the following aspects:

3.2.1 Feudal System

One of the most significant socio-political changes during the Anglo-Norman Period was the establishment of the feudal system. The Normans introduced this hierarchical structure of landholding and governance, which centralized power in the hands of the monarch and the nobility. This system was characterized by a network of loyalties and obligations, wherein vassals held land (fiefs) from their lords in exchange for military service and other duties.

3.2.2 Centralized Administration

The Normans implemented a centralized administrative system in England, with the king as the supreme authority. They established the Great Council (later known as the Parliament) to advise the king on legal and financial matters. Moreover, they introduced the Exchequer, a department responsible for managing royal finances, and the Domesday Book, a comprehensive survey of landholdings and resources in England.

3.2.3 Legal Reforms

The Anglo-Norman Period witnessed significant legal reforms, as the Normans sought to consolidate their rule and create a more uniform legal system. They introduced the concept of common law, which involved the application of uniform laws across the kingdom. Additionally, trial by jury and the establishment of royal courts helped to centralize the legal system and reduce the influence of local customs and practices.

3.2.4 Social Changes

The Norman Conquest led to a shift in the social hierarchy of England. The Anglo-Saxon nobility was largely replaced by Norman lords, who acquired lands and titles through the feudal system. This resulted in a new social order dominated by the Normans, who introduced their language (Anglo-Norman, a variant of Old French) and customs to the English aristocracy. Over time, the Anglo-Saxon and Norman cultures merged, giving rise to a distinct Anglo-Norman identity.

3.2.5 Cultural and Linguistic Impact

The Anglo-Norman Period had a significant cultural and linguistic impact on England. The Normans introduced the French language and culture to the English court, which resulted in the development of a bilingual society. Latin remained the language of the Church and scholarship, while Old French became the language of the aristocracy, and Old English continued to be spoken by the common people. This linguistic diversity led to the gradual evolution of Middle English, which emerged as the dominant language by the end of the 14th century.

3.2.6 Church Reforms

The Normans brought about significant reforms in the English Church as well. They replaced Anglo-Saxon bishops with Norman clergy and introduced Romanesque architecture, which led to the construction of several monasteries, abbeys, and churches in the Romanesque style. These reforms aimed to strengthen the authority of the Church and align it more closely with the broader Roman Catholic Church.

In conclusion, the socio-political background of the Anglo-Norman Period was characterized by significant changes in governance, social structure, legal systems, and

cultural practices. The Norman Conquest left a lasting impact on the development of England, shaping its political, social, and cultural identity for centuries to come.

3.3 THE CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS OF LITERATURE DURING ANGLO-NORMAN PERIOD

The Anglo-Norman period of English literature spans from the Norman Conquest in 1066 to the early 13th century. This era was marked by the arrival of the Normans, led by William the Conqueror, who brought with them a new language, culture, and literary tradition. As a result, the Old English vernacular was gradually replaced by the Anglo-Norman language, a variant of Old French spoken by the ruling class in England. The literature produced during this period is primarily characterized by its linguistic and cultural fusion, religious themes, and the emergence of new literary forms and genres.

3.3.1 Linguistic and Cultural Fusion

The Anglo-Norman period saw a blending of the French and English languages, leading to the development of a unique linguistic and cultural environment. This linguistic fusion is evident in the literature of the period, as works were often composed in Anglo-Norman or Latin, with Old English gradually fading as a literary language. The blending of cultures is also visible in the themes and subject matter of the literature, as native English traditions began to intermingle with new norman and continental influences.

3.3.2 Religious Themes

As in the Anglo-Saxon period, religious themes continued to dominate the literature of the Anglo-Norman era. The Normans were fervent supporters of the Roman Catholic Church, and their literary works often served to propagate Christian beliefs and values. Many texts from this period are religious in nature, such as hagiographies, biblical translations, sermons, and moral treatises. However, the religious literature of the Anglo- Norman period is distinguished by its increased emphasis on the Virgin Mary, reflecting the growing Marian devotion in medieval Europe.

3.3.3 Chivalric Literature and Romance

One of the most significant literary innovations of the Anglo-Norman period was the emergence of chivalric literature and romance. Influenced by the continental tradition of the chanson de geste, this new genre celebrated the ideals of chivalry, courtly love, and heroic adventure. The chivalric romance often featured stories of knights, their love interests, and their heroic exploits. It introduced elements of fantasy and supernatural occurrences, which set it apart from earlier heroic poetry.

3.3.4 Lyric Poetry

The Anglo-Norman period also witnessed the development of lyric poetry. These short, expressive poems were often composed in the vernacular and focused on themes such as love, nature, and religious devotion. Lyric poetry from this period is characterized by its emotional intensity, vivid imagery, and musical quality. Some of the most notable Anglo- Norman lyric poets include Marie de France, who wrote "Lais" (short narrative poems), and the anonymous authors of various religious lyrics and love songs.

3.3.5 Legal and Administrative Literature

The Normans introduced a new legal and administrative system to England, and this led to the production of various legal and administrative texts. These works, often composed in Latin or Anglo-Norman, documented laws, charters, and other administrative materials. The most famous legal work from this period is the "Domesday Book" (1086), a comprehensive survey of landholdings and resources in England commissioned by William the Conqueror.

3.3.6 Religious and Didactic Literature

The Anglo-Norman period saw the continued production of religious and didactic literature, often written in Latin or Anglo-Norman. This genre encompassed a wide range of texts, including hagiographies, saints' lives, sermons, biblical commentaries, and moral treatises. One of the most famous didactic works of the period is "Ancrene Wisse" (1225), a guide for female religious recluses that provides instructions on various aspects of religious life.

3.3.7 Drama

Although drama as a literary genre did not fully develop until the later Middle Ages, the foundations for its emergence can be traced back to the Anglo-Norman period. Liturgical drama, which originated in the form of religious plays performed within the church, began to evolve during this time. The "Quem Quaeritis" trope, an Easter liturgical play, is one of the earliest examples of this burgeoning dramatic tradition.

In conclusion, the literature of the Anglo-Norman period is characterized by its linguistic and cultural fusion, religious themes, and the emergence of new literary forms and genres. This era laid the foundation for the development of Middle English literature and the flourishing of vernacular writing in later centuries. The works produced during the Anglo- Norman period not only serve as valuable sources for understanding the history and culture of the time but also continue to inspire and influence English literature today.

3.4 POETS AND THEIR POETRY DURING ANGLO-NORMAN PERIOD

The Anglo-Norman period, which spans from the Norman Conquest in 1066 until the late 12th century, was characterized by the blending of English and Norman cultures. As a result, both English and Anglo-Norman (Old French spoken by the Normans) languages were used in literary works. Here are some notable poets and writers from the Anglo-Norman period:

3.4.1 Wace (1110 – 1174)

Wace was a poet from Jersey in the Channel Islands who wrote in Anglo- Norman. He is best known for his works "Roman de Brut" and "Roman de Rou." "Roman de Brut" is a verse chronicle that traces the history of Britain from its mythical founding by Brutus to the 7th century. "Roman de Rou" covers the history of the Dukes of Normandy, including the events surrounding the Norman Conquest. Both works were significant sources of information for later historians and served as inspiration for various Arthurian legends.

3.4.2 Marie de France (Late 12th Century)

Marie de France was a poet who wrote in Anglo- Norman, and she is considered one of the most important female poets of the medieval period. She is best known for her "Lais," a collection of 12 short narrative poems, which often explore themes of love, chivalry, and the supernatural. Marie also wrote "Fables," a collection of over 100 moral tales inspired by Aesop's fables, and "Saint Patrick's Purgatory," a religious allegory.

3.4.3 Geoffrey of Monmouth (1095 –1155)

Although Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote in Latin rather than Anglo-Norman, he is a significant figure in English literary history due to his influence on later writers. His most famous work, "Historia Regum Britanniae" (History of the Kings of Britain), is a pseudo-historical account of British history that weaves together historical events, legends, and myths. This work introduced the legendary King Arthur to a wider audience and greatly influenced the development of the Arthurian tradition in later literature.

3.4.4 Layamon (Late 12th Century – Early 13th Century)

Layamon was an English poet who wrote "Brut," a Middle English adaptation of Wace's "Roman de Brut." Though the language of "Brut" is considered early Middle English, Layamon's work is an important connection between Old English and Middle English literature. The poem provides an account

of English history from the mythical founding of Britain to the end of the Anglo-Saxon period and introduces elements of native English folklore and mythology.

While Old English literary works continued to be produced during the Anglo-Norman period, the influence of the Norman Conquest and the use of the Anglo-Norman language in the upper class and the court led to the emergence of a distinct Anglo-Norman literary tradition.

These poets and their works had a profound impact on the development of English literature, including the growth of the Arthurian legend and the transition from Old English to Middle English.

3.5 MORALITY, MIRACLE AND MYSTERY PLAYS DURING ANGLO-NORMAN PERIOD

During the Anglo-Norman period, the development of drama as a distinct genre was still in its early stages. Morality, miracle, and mystery plays, which would later become prominent forms of medieval drama, did not fully emerge until the 14th and 15th centuries. However, the foundations for these types of plays can be traced back to the religious and liturgical traditions of the Anglo-Norman period.

3.5.1 Morality Plays

Morality plays are allegorical dramas that teach moral lessons through the personification of abstract virtues and vices, such as Good Deeds, Knowledge, and Pride. These plays usually focus on a protagonist's journey toward redemption or salvation. Although morality plays became more prevalent in the late Middle Ages, the roots of this genre can be found in the didactic literature and religious themes of the Anglo-Norman period.

3.5.2 Miracle Plays

Miracle plays, also known as saint plays, are a type of religious drama that recounts the lives, miracles, and martyrdoms of saints. These plays were intended to promote piety and devotion among the audience. Miracle plays can be linked to the hagiographical literature of the Anglo-Norman period, which saw a surge in the production of saints' lives and other religious texts. The development of miracle plays as a distinct genre, however, occurred later in the Middle Ages.

3.5.3 Mystery Plays

Mystery plays, or cycle plays, are dramatic representations of biblical stories, often performed in a series or cycle. They depict events from the Creation to the Last Judgment, with a focus on the life, passion, and

resurrection of Jesus Christ. The origins of mystery plays can be traced back to the liturgical dramas of the Anglo-Norman period, such as the "Quem Quaeritis" trope, an Easter liturgical play. These early liturgical dramas gradually evolved into more elaborate, vernacular performances that took place outside the church and involved the participation of local communities and guilds.

In summary, while morality, miracle, and mystery plays did not fully develop as distinct genres during the Anglo-Norman period, the religious and liturgical traditions of the time laid the groundwork for their emergence in the late Middle Ages. The growth of vernacular literature, the increasing prominence of lay religious devotion, and the development of a more distinct theatrical tradition in the following centuries all contributed to the flourishing of these forms of medieval drama.

3.6 LET'S US SUM UP

In this unit you explored the rich cultural and linguistic fusion that characterized the period following the Norman Conquest of 1066. The unit examines the influence of French on English literature, particularly the introduction of courtly romance, chivalric ideals, and religious allegories that became central to the literature of this time. Key literary works and figures are discussed, showcasing how these texts reflect the blending of Anglo-Saxon and Norman traditions.

Through the study of this unit, you gained an understanding of how the Norman influence brought changes not only to the English language but also to literary themes and forms. They explore the development of romance as a dominant genre and the shift from heroic to courtly values in literature. Additionally, the unit highlights the role of monasteries and scholars in preserving and translating important works during this period.

Now, you (learners) are able to identify the defining characteristics of Anglo-Norman literature, recognize the cultural and linguistic transformations it brought to England, and appreciate how this period laid the groundwork for the evolution of Middle English literature in the centuries to follow.

3.7 QUESTIONS

1. How did the Norman Conquest of 1066 influence the language and themes of English literature during the Anglo-Norman period?

2. Discuss the significance of the courtly romance genre in Anglo-Norman literature. How did it differ from the heroic tradition of Anglo-Saxon literature?

3. Who were some of the key literary figures of the Anglo-Norman period, such as Marie de France and Wace, and what contributions did they make to English literature?

4. What role did monasteries and scholars play in preserving and transmitting literature during the Anglo-Norman period?

5. How did the blending of Anglo-Saxon and Norman traditions shape the development of literary themes and forms in the Anglo-Norman period?

3.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

"A History of English Literature" by Michael Alexander

"The Norton Anthology of English Literature" edited by M.H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt

"The Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature" edited by Pat Rogers

"The Cambridge History of English Literature" edited by A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller

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"English Literature a Survey for Students" by Burgess, Anthony

"Longman Companion to English Literature" by Gillie, Christopher

"The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales" by F.N. Robinson

UNIT 4 CHAUCER AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Structure

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, the learners will be able:

- To examine the life and literary contributions of Geoffrey Chaucer, understanding his significance as a key figure in the development of English literature during the Middle Ages.
- To analyze the major works of Chaucer, such as "The Canterbury Tales," exploring their themes, characters, narrative techniques, and social commentary, and understanding their impact on the literary landscape of the time.
- To explore the works of Chaucer's contemporaries, including writers such as John Gower, William Langland, and the Pearl Poet, examining their literary styles, themes, and contributions to the literary traditions of the Middle Ages.

- To investigate the social, cultural, and historical context in which Chaucer and his contemporaries wrote, understanding how their works reflect and engage with the society and values of the time.
- To assess the enduring influence of Chaucer and his contemporaries on English literature, tracing their impact on subsequent generations of writers and understanding their contributions to the development of literary forms, themes, and techniques in later periods.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The unit, "Chaucer and His Contemporaries" embarks on a journey into the vibrant world of English literature during the Middle Ages, focusing on the literary contributions of Geoffrey Chaucer and his fellow writers. Chaucer, known as the "Father of English Literature," played a pivotal role in shaping the development of the English language and literature. Alongside Chaucer, we will delve into the works of his contemporaries, who added their unique voices to the literary landscape of the time. By delving into their poetry, prose, and plays, we aim to unravel the social, cultural, and artistic dimensions of this remarkable period in English literary history. This unit discusses the works of Chaucer, his fellow writers and Scottish Chaucerian by exploring their enduring legacy in shaping English literature.

4.2 SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE AGE OF CHAUCER

The Age of Chaucer, spanning the 14th century, was a time of significant social, political, and cultural change in England. The era was marked by a series of events that influenced not only Geoffrey Chaucer's life and works but also the broader landscape of English literature and society. Understanding this socio-political background is crucial to interpreting Chaucer's writings and the development of English literature during this period.

4.2.1 Hundred Years' War (1337-1453)

The ongoing conflict between England and France during the 14th and 15th centuries greatly impacted England's politics and economy. The war drained resources, led to the rise of a professional military class, and resulted in fluctuations in national pride and identity. Chaucer himself served as a soldier in this war and was captured in France, which later exposed him to continental literary and intellectual influences.

4.2.2 Black Death (1347-1351)

The bubonic plague ravaged Europe in the mid-14th century, killing an estimated one-third of England's population. This catastrophic event had profound social, economic, and psychological consequences. The dramatic reduction in the workforce led to labor shortages, increased wages, and social mobility for the lower classes. The plague also contributed to a general sense of mortality and an urgency to address matters of faith, morality, and the afterlife, themes that are evident in Chaucer's works.

4.2.3 Peasants' Revolt (1381)

This widespread rebellion was fueled by economic and social grievances, particularly the introduction of a poll tax that disproportionately burdened the lower classes. Although the revolt was ultimately suppressed, it revealed the growing unrest and dissatisfaction among the common people. Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" reflects this tension by presenting characters from various social backgrounds and providing a platform for their voices and stories.

4.2.4 Church and Religious Dissent

The 14th century saw growing criticism of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as the emergence of dissenting religious movements such as Lollardy, which called for church reform and the translation of the Bible into English. Chaucer's works contain subtle but discernible critiques of religious hypocrisy and corruption, suggesting his awareness of these contemporary debates.

4.2.5 Literary and Intellectual Climate

The Age of Chaucer saw a flourishing of literature, art, and intellectual thought, partly due to increased contact with continental Europe. The works of Italian authors such as Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch were influential in shaping Chaucer's literary style and themes. Additionally, the growth of a vernacular literary tradition, as well as the development of new poetic forms and genres, provided Chaucer with the tools to create innovative and ground-breaking works.

4.2.6 Chivalry and Courtly Culture

Chivalry, the code of conduct associated with the medieval knightly class, was an important cultural force in the Age of Chaucer. Courtly love, an idealized and often secret form of romantic love, was a central theme in the literature and art of the time. Chaucer's works engage with these themes, often subverting or questioning traditional notions of chivalry and courtly love.

4.2.7 Political Intrigue and Royal Court

The 14th-century English monarchy was characterized by political instability, intrigue, and conflict. Chaucer's own life was closely connected to the royal court, as he served in various administrative and diplomatic roles. This proximity to power provided Chaucer with unique insights into the workings of the political elite, which he subtly incorporated into his works.

In conclusion, the Age of Chaucer was marked by profound social, political, and cultural shifts that shaped the literary landscape of the time. Chaucer's works, particularly "The Canterbury Tales," reflect the complexity and diversity.

4.3 LITERATURE DURING THE AGE OF CHAUCER

The Age of Chaucer, which roughly spans the 14th century, was a period of significant literary development in England. Geoffrey Chaucer, often considered the "Father of English literature," was a central figure during this time, and his works had a profound impact on the literary landscape. In addition to Chaucer's own works, several other notable literary achievements emerged during this period. Key aspects of literature during the Age of Chaucer include:

Geoffrey Chaucer: Chaucer is best known for his masterpiece, "The Canterbury Tales," a collection of stories told by a diverse group of pilgrims traveling together to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket. This work is renowned for its vivid characterization, humor, and use of a variety of narrative styles and genres, including romance, fabliau, and moral allegory. Chaucer also wrote other significant works, such as "Troilus and Criseyde," "The Book of the Duchess," "The House of Fame," and "The Parliament of Fowls."

Courtly Love and Romance: The Age of Chaucer saw the popularization of the courtly love tradition, which influenced numerous works of poetry and prose. Courtly love literature often featured tales of knights and their noble quests to win the affection of a lady, usually from a higher social status. Notable works and authors:

"Sir Gawain and the Green Knight": An anonymous Arthurian romance that explores themes of chivalry, courtly love, and the nature of truth and honor.

"The Pearl Poet": An anonymous poet who authored "Pearl," "Cleanness," "Patience," and "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight."

Allegory and Social Critique: Allegorical works that critiqued the social, religious, and political landscape of the time gained popularity during the Age of Chaucer. Notable works and authors:

William Langland's "Piers Plowman": An allegorical narrative poem that critiques the social, religious, and political issues of 14th-century England.

John Gower's "Confessio Amantis": A collection of stories within a frame narrative that explores the theme of love and delves into moral and political issues.

Religious and Devotional Literature: Religious and devotional literature played an essential role during the Age of Chaucer, with the composition of various works such as theological treatises, sermons, and mystical writings. Notable works and authors:

Julian of Norwich's "Revelations of Divine Love": A visionary and devotional work that provides insight into the nature of God's love and the human soul.

"The Cloud of Unknowing": An anonymous work of Christian mysticism that encourages a contemplative approach to prayer and union with God.

Vernacular Literature: The Age of Chaucer marked the rise of vernacular literature, as English gradually replaced Latin and French as the dominant language for literary works. Chaucer's use of the vernacular in his works, especially "The Canterbury Tales," greatly contributed to the establishment of English as a literary language.

The Age of Chaucer was a vibrant and innovative period in English literature, characterized by a wide range of themes, genres, and styles. The works produced during this time laid the groundwork for the English Renaissance and continue to influence modern literature.

4.4 GEOFFREY CHAUCER: BIOGRAPHY

Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400) was an English poet, author, and civil servant, widely regarded as one of the most significant figures in the development of English literature. Known as the "Father of English Poetry," Chaucer is best remembered for his magnum opus, "The Canterbury Tales," a collection of stories told by a diverse group of pilgrims on their way to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury. Through his works, Chaucer helped to establish the legitimacy of English as a literary language, in a time when Latin and French were the dominant languages for literature and intellectual pursuits.

Chaucer was born into a prosperous middle-class family in London around 1343. His father, John Chaucer, was a successful wine merchant, and his mother, Agnes, came from a family of affluent trades people. This background provided Chaucer with a stable upbringing and opportunities for social mobility. Although little is known about Chaucer's early life and education, it is believed that he attended St. Paul's Almonry School, where he would have learned Latin, French, and possibly some Italian.

In his teens, Chaucer became a page in the household of Elizabeth de Burgh, Countess of Ulster, which introduced him to the world of courtly life and chivalric culture. Later, he served as a soldier in the Hundred Years' War, during which he was captured in France and ransomed with the help of King Edward III. Upon his return to England, Chaucer married Philippa de Roet, a lady-in-waiting to Queen Philippa of Hainault, and continued to serve in various roles within the royal court.

Chaucer's diplomatic and administrative career provided him with a wealth of experiences and connections that would inform his literary works. He was appointed as a royal messenger, customs official, and eventually as the Clerk of the King's Works, overseeing construction and maintenance projects for the royal estates. His work took him on diplomatic missions to France, Italy, and Spain, exposing him to the literary and intellectual currents of the time, such as the works of Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch.

Chaucer's literary career began in the 1360s, with his earliest works heavily influenced by French poetry and the courtly love tradition. His first major work, "The Book of the Duchess," was an elegy for Blanche of Lancaster, wife of John of Gaunt, and demonstrated his skill in blending classical and contemporary themes. Chaucer continued to experiment with various

forms and genres, producing works such as "The House of Fame," "The Parliament of Fowls," and "Troilus and Criseyde," which showcased his mastery of narrative, allegory, and character development.

"The Canterbury Tales," Chaucer's most famous work, was composed over several decades, with the poet working on it until his death in 1400. This ambitious project brought together a diverse group of characters from various social classes, each telling a story to entertain their fellow pilgrims. The tales range from the bawdy and humorous to the serious and moral, and they demonstrate Chaucer's gift for vivid characterization, dialogue, and storytelling. "The Canterbury Tales" was written in Middle English, a language that was accessible to a wider audience than Latin or French, and this choice helped to establish English as a legitimate literary language.

Chaucer died on October 25, 1400, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, an honor that signified his importance as a poet and cultural figure. His works continued to be read and admired in the centuries that

followed, influencing generations of English writers, including William Shakespeare, John Milton, and Geoffrey Hill. Chaucer's contributions to English literature and the development of the English language cannot be overstated. Some of the key aspects of his legacy include:

Vernacular Literature: By choosing to write in Middle English, Chaucer helped legitimize the use of the English language in literature. His success in crafting sophisticated and engaging works in the vernacular demonstrated that English could convey complex ideas and emotions just as effectively as Latin or French.

Poetic Forms and Styles: Chaucer introduced and adapted various poetic forms and styles from continental Europe, such as the iambic pentameter, the rhymed couplet, and the heroic couplet. These innovations greatly influenced the structure and style of English poetry in the following centuries.

Realism and Characterization: Chaucer's vivid and detailed portrayals of characters from all walks of life showcased his keen understanding of human nature and his ability to create complex, multidimensional characters. His works provided a window into the social, cultural, and political realities of his time, making them valuable historical documents as well as literary masterpieces.

Humor and Satire: Chaucer's wit and humor are hallmarks of his writing, and his satirical observations of society, institutions, and human behavior make his works both entertaining and thought-provoking. His ability to balance humor with moral and philosophical insights demonstrates his skill as a storyteller and a social commentator.

Influence on Later Writers: Chaucer's works had a profound impact on the development of English literature, shaping the creative endeavors of countless writers who followed in his footsteps. His influence can be seen in the works of authors such as William Shakespeare, who borrowed from Chaucer's themes and characterizations, as well as later writers like John Dryden and Alexander Pope, who looked to Chaucer as a model for their own poetry.

In conclusion, Geoffrey Chaucer's life and works represent a crucial turning point in the history of English literature. His innovative use of language, form, and style, as well as his talent for storytelling and characterization, has left an indelible mark on the literary tradition. Chaucer's legacy endures in the works of the countless authors he has inspired and in the continued study and appreciation of his own remarkable oeuvre.

4.5 MAJOR WORKS OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Geoffrey Chaucer, a prominent figure in English literature, produced a substantial body of work during his lifetime. While his most famous work is "The Canterbury Tales," Chaucer authored several other notable poems, translations, and prose pieces. Here are some of his major works:

"The Canterbury Tales" (1387-1400) Chaucer's best-known work is a collection of stories told by a group of pilgrims on their way to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. The tales, which encompass various genres such as romance, fabliau, and moral allegory, are told in verse and provide a vivid portrayal of 14th-century English society.

"Troilus and Criseyde" (1381-1386): This narrative poem is a retelling of the tragic love story between Troilus, a Trojan prince, and Criseyde, a beautiful widow. Chaucer drew inspiration from the works of Boccaccio, particularly "Il Filostrato." The poem explores themes of love, loyalty, and the nature of fortune.

"The Book of the Duchess" (1369-1372): This elegiac dream-vision poem is believed to have been written as a tribute to Blanche of Lancaster, the late wife of Chaucer's patron, John of Gaunt. The poem features a grieving knight who mourns the loss of his beloved lady and delves into themes of love, loss, and consolation.

"The House of Fame" (1379-1380): This dream-vision poem follows the narrator, who is guided by a talking eagle, on a journey to the House of Fame. The poem explores the nature of fame, reputation, and the power of language, showcasing Chaucer's wit and his engagement with classical sources such as Virgil and Ovid.

"The Parliament of Fowls" (1381-1382): Another dream-vision poem, "The Parliament of Fowls" is a humorous allegory centered on a parliament of birds that have gathered to choose their mates. The poem is notable for its engagement with themes of love and courtship and its vivid depiction of the natural world.

"The Legend of Good Women" (1386-1388): This unfinished collection of stories features a prologue in which the narrator is reprimanded by the God of Love for his depiction of women in his previous works. In response, the narrator pledges to write a series of stories celebrating virtuous women from classical mythology and history.

Translations: Chaucer was responsible for several translations of important works, the most notable being "The Consolation of Philosophy" by Boethius. This influential philosophical text addresses themes such as the nature of fortune, the problem of evil, and the relationship between happiness and virtue.

"A Treatise on the Astrolabe" (1391): This prose work, written for Chaucer's son Lewis, is a practical guide to the use of the astrolabe, an astronomical instrument used for measuring celestial positions. It is notable as one of the earliest technical works written in English.

While this list covers Chaucer's major works, he also produced numerous shorter poems, such as "Anelida and Arcite," "The Complaint of Mars," "The Complaint of Venus," and "The Complaint Unto Pity." Chaucer's literary output is characterized by its diversity, inventiveness, and engagement with the social, political, and cultural issues of his time.

4.6 GEOFFREY CHAUCER AS THE "FATHER OF ENGLISH POETRY"

Geoffrey Chaucer, often referred to as the "Father of English Poetry," was a 14th-century poet, writer, and civil servant who played a pivotal role in the development of English literature. His most famous work, "The Canterbury Tales," is considered a masterpiece that has had a profound and lasting impact on the literary world. Chaucer's title as the "Father of English Poetry" is attributed to the following factors:

Establishing English as a Literary Language: At the time Chaucer was writing, Latin and French were the dominant languages for literature, especially among the educated and upper classes. Chaucer chose to write in Middle English, the vernacular language spoken by the majority of the population. This decision was ground-breaking and helped to legitimize English as a language capable of producing sophisticated and engaging literature.

Innovating Poetic Forms and Styles: Chaucer introduced new poetic forms and styles to English literature, drawing inspiration from French, Italian, and Latin sources. He adapted and popularized the iambic pentameter, the rhymed couplet, and the heroic couplet, which would become standard forms in English poetry for centuries to come.

Rich Characterization and Storytelling: Chaucer's works display a remarkable ability to create vivid, multidimensional characters from various social backgrounds. His skillful use of dialogue, dialect, and narrative techniques make his characters feel authentic and relatable. This talent for characterization and storytelling would become a hallmark of English literature.

Exploration of Universal Themes: Chaucer's works tackle a wide range of themes, such as love, morality, social class, and religion, that remain relevant and engaging to modern

readers. His ability to address these universal themes with humor, wit, and compassion makes his works timeless and appealing across generations.

Social Commentary: Chaucer's works, particularly "The Canterbury Tales," provide a unique insight into the social, political, and cultural landscape of 14th-century England. He uses his characters and stories to critique and satirize various aspects of society, including corruption within the Church and the hypocrisy of the ruling classes. This focus on social commentary has become an essential aspect of English literature.

Influence on Later Writers: Chaucer's works have had a profound impact on the development of English literature, inspiring and influencing countless writers who followed in his footsteps. His legacy can be seen in the works of authors such as William Shakespeare, John Milton, and many more, who borrowed from Chaucer's themes, characterizations, and narrative techniques.

In conclusion, Geoffrey Chaucer's contributions to English literature, his innovative use of language and form, and his timeless exploration of universal themes have cemented his position as the "Father of English Poetry." His works have left an indelible mark on the literary tradition and continue to inspire and engage readers to this day.

4.7 CHIEF FEATURES OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S POETRY

Geoffrey Chaucer, a 14th-century poet often referred to as the "Father of English Poetry," has left a lasting impact on the literary world with his innovative and engaging works. The following points further emphasize Chaucer's significance and the chief features of his poetry:

Use of Middle English: Chaucer chose to write in Middle English, the vernacular language spoken by the majority of the population at that time. This decision helped to legitimize English as a language capable of producing sophisticated literature and established it as an important literary language alongside Latin and French.

Mastery of Poetic Forms and Styles: Chaucer introduced and adapted various poetic forms and styles from continental Europe, such as the iambic pentameter, the rhymed couplet, and the heroic couplet. These innovations greatly influenced the structure and style of English poetry in the centuries that followed.

Rich Characterization: Chaucer's works are known for their vivid and detailed portrayals of characters from all walks of life. His ability to create complex, multidimensional characters using dialogue, dialect, and narrative techniques is a hallmark of his writing. This talent for characterization makes his works relatable and engaging to readers across generations.

Storytelling and Narrative Structure: Chaucer's works, particularly "The Canterbury Tales," are notable for their innovative narrative structure. The framing device of a group of pilgrims on a journey, each telling a story to entertain their fellow travelers, allows Chaucer to weave together diverse tales and perspectives. This structure also enables him to experiment with different literary genres and styles within a single work.

Exploration of Universal Themes: Chaucer's works tackle a wide range of themes, such as love, morality, social class, and religion remain relevant and engaging to modern readers. His ability to address these universal themes with humor, wit, and compassion contributes to the timeless appeal of his works.

Social Commentary and Satire: Chaucer's works often contain subtle but discernible critiques of various aspects of 14th-century society, including corruption within the Church, hypocrisy among the ruling classes, and the limitations of the chivalric code. His use of humor and satire to convey these critiques makes his works both entertaining and thought-provoking.

Engagement with Literary Tradition: Chaucer was well-read in the literary and intellectual currents of his time, drawing inspiration from French, Italian, and Latin sources. His works engage with and adapt these influences, showcasing his ability to synthesize diverse literary traditions and create something uniquely English.

Linguistic and Stylistic Innovation: Chaucer's works display a mastery of the English language, with a keen ear for rhythm, rhyme, and wordplay. His inventive use of language, including the creation of new words and the adaptation of existing ones, contributed to the development of the English language and its expressive potential.

Influence on Later Writers: Chaucer's works have had a profound impact on the development of English literature, shaping the creative endeavors of countless writers who followed in his footsteps. His influence can be seen in the works of authors such as William Shakespeare, John Milton, and Geoffrey Hill, among others.

Humanism: Chaucer's works are imbued with a humanistic spirit, characterized by an emphasis on individual experience, the value of human reason, and the complexity of human emotions. This humanistic perspective would later become a central tenet of Renaissance literature and thought.

Focus on Realism: Chaucer's works often demonstrate a keen interest in the lives and experiences of ordinary people. His attention to realistic details, such as clothing, occupations, and social customs, provides readers with valuable insights into the daily life of 14th-century England. This focus on realism distinguishes Chaucer's works from the more allegorical and fantastical literature that preceded him.

Use of Multiple Perspectives: Chaucer's works, particularly "The Canterbury Tales," incorporate a wide range of perspectives, giving voice to characters from different social classes, genders, and backgrounds. This multiplicity of viewpoints creates a rich and diverse tapestry of human experience, allowing Chaucer to explore the complexities of society and human relationships.

Intertextuality: Chaucer's poetry often references and engages with other literary works, creating a sense of intertextuality that enriches the reading experience. For example, Chaucer's "Troilus and Criseyde" is based on Boccaccio's "Il Filostrato," and "The Canterbury Tales" borrows themes and motifs from various sources, including classical mythology, medieval romances, and religious texts.

Experimentation with Genre: Chaucer's works showcase his willingness to experiment with various literary genres, such as romance, fabliau, beast fable, and hagiography. This experimentation reflects Chaucer's creative versatility and contributes to the richness and variety of his poetic output.

Moral and Philosophical Depth: Chaucer's works are not only entertaining but also explore moral and philosophical questions, such as the nature of love, the role of fate and free will, and the relationship between appearance and reality. His ability to engage with these deeper issues while maintaining a sense of humor and playfulness is a testament to his skill as a writer.

Accessible Language and Style: Despite the challenges posed by the passage of time and the evolution of the English language, Chaucer's works remain surprisingly accessible to modern readers. His lively and engaging style, combined with his skillful use of humor and wordplay, make his poetry enjoyable and rewarding for contemporary audiences.

The Status of Women: Chaucer's works often feature strong, independent female characters and explore the position of women in 14th-century society. His nuanced portrayals of women, such as the Wife of Bath, challenge traditional gender roles and provide a platform for female voices and experiences.

Overall, Geoffrey Chaucer's poetry stands out for its innovative use of language, form, and narrative structure, its engagement with contemporary social issues, and its exploration of timeless themes and human experiences. As the "Father of English Poetry," Chaucer's works have left an indelible mark on the literary landscape, shaping the creative endeavors of generations of writers and continuing to inspire readers and scholars to this day.

In conclusion, Geoffrey Chaucer's poetry is characterized by its innovative use of language and form, rich characterization, engaging storytelling, exploration of universal themes, and social commentary. These features, combined with his lasting influence on later writers and the development of the English language, have cemented Chaucer's position as a seminal figure in the history of English literature.

4.8 THE USE OF LANGUAGE AND DICTION IN THE POETRY OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Geoffrey Chaucer's use of language and diction in his works, particularly in "The Canterbury Tales," is a significant factor in his enduring appeal and influence on English literature.

Chaucer's language reflects the rich diversity of 14th-century England, and his diction is characterized by the following features:

Middle English: Chaucer wrote in Middle English, which was the vernacular language of his time. His choice of language allowed his works to reach a broader audience and contributed to the development of the English language and its literary tradition. Chaucer's Middle English is markedly different from Modern English, and contemporary readers may require some effort to understand the nuances and complexities of his language.

Regional Dialects: Chaucer's works reflect the linguistic diversity of 14th-century England by incorporating various regional dialects. In "The Canterbury Tales," the characters come from different parts of England, and their dialects are depicted in their speech patterns, vocabulary, and accents. This attention to dialects not only adds to the authenticity of the characters but also highlights the cultural diversity of medieval England.

Varied Vocabulary: Chaucer's diction is characterized by a rich and varied vocabulary, which draws from a wide range of sources, including Latin, French, and Old English. His use of specialized terminology and colloquial expressions enhances the realism and depth of his characters, while his skillful wordplay, puns, and double entendres contribute to the humor and wit of his works.

Poetic Devices: Chaucer made extensive use of poetic devices, such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, and rhyme, to create rhythm and musicality in his works. In "The Canterbury Tales," he employed a diverse range of verse forms, including heroic couplets, which consist of rhymed iambic pentameter lines, and various stanzaic forms, such as the ballade and the rime royal.

Syntax and Style: Chaucer's syntax and style are marked by flexibility and adaptability, allowing him to effectively convey the personalities, emotions, and social backgrounds of his characters. He employed a variety of sentence structures, ranging from simple and direct statements to complex and intricate constructions. His style can be descriptive, conversational, or narrative, depending on the context and the character he is portraying.

Characterization through Diction: Chaucer masterfully uses diction to reveal the personalities, values, and social backgrounds of his characters. In "The Canterbury Tales," the characters' speech patterns, word choices, and linguistic styles offer insights into their motivations, attitudes, and moral complexities. For instance, the Pardoner's manipulative and deceitful nature is evident in his persuasive and eloquent speech, while the Miller's coarse language reflects his bawdy humor and low social status.

In conclusion, Geoffrey Chaucer's use of language and diction played a crucial role in shaping the literary landscape of his time and continues to influence English literature today. His mastery of Middle English, attention to regional dialects, varied vocabulary, poetic devices, and skillful characterization through diction contributed to the enduring appeal and significance of his works.

4.9 HUMOR, IRONY AND SATIRE IN THE WORKS OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Geoffrey Chaucer, often regarded as the Father of English Poetry, was a master of humor, irony, and satire. In his works, particularly "The Canterbury Tales," Chaucer employed these literary devices to offer keen insights into human nature and to provide commentary on the social, religious, and political issues of his time. Here are some examples of humor, irony, and satire in Chaucer's works:

The Canterbury Tales: This collection of stories told by a group of pilgrims on their way to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury is Chaucer's most famous work. Each of the pilgrims tells a tale, often reflecting their own character or occupation, allowing Chaucer to satirize various aspects of 14th-century society. The diversity of the characters and their stories allowed Chaucer to explore a wide range of humorous, ironic, and satirical situations.

Humor: Chaucer's humor often stems from the absurdity or incongruity of certain situations, as well as from the vivid and colorful descriptions of characters and events. For example, in "The Miller's Tale," the farcical and bawdy situations involving the characters create a humorous atmosphere. Chaucer's humor also arises from his wordplay and the clever use of puns, double entendres, and innuendos.

Irony: Chaucer frequently employs irony in his works to convey deeper meanings and highlight the discrepancies between appearance and reality. For example, in "The Pardoner's Tale," the Pardoner, who is himself corrupt and greedy, tells a moralizing tale about the dangers of greed and avarice. The irony lies in the Pardoner's hypocrisy, as he fails to recognize the moral implications of his own actions.

Satire: Chaucer's works are rich in satire, as he uses humor and irony to criticize various aspects of 14th-century society, including the Church, the nobility, and the common people. In "The Canterbury Tales," many of the pilgrims represent different social classes or professions, allowing Chaucer to satirize a broad range of societal issues. For example, the Friar, the Summoner, and the Pardoner are all figures from the religious sphere, yet their tales and behavior reveal the corruption and moral decay that plagued the Church at the time.

Social commentary: Through humor, irony, and satire, Chaucer's works provide incisive social commentary on the issues of his time. His characters and their stories touch on themes such as gender roles, social class, and the abuse of power. By employing these literary devices, Chaucer was able to offer a critique of society while still maintaining an engaging and entertaining narrative.

In conclusion, humor, irony, and satire are essential elements in the works of Geoffrey Chaucer. These literary devices allowed Chaucer to provide keen insights into human nature, critique various aspects of 14th-century society, and create engaging, entertaining narratives.

Chaucer's skillful use of humor, irony, and satire has made his works enduring classics that continue to be enjoyed and studied by readers and scholars today.

4.10 GEOFFREY CHAUCER AS A REPRESENTATIVE POET OF HIS AGE

Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400), often referred to as the "Father of English Literature," is widely regarded as the foremost poet of the Middle English period. His most famous work, "The Canterbury Tales," is a collection of stories told by a diverse group of pilgrims journeying from London to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket in Canterbury. Chaucer is considered a representative poet of his age due to his unique ability to capture the zeitgeist of 14th-century England, portraying the social, political, and cultural atmosphere of his time in his writings. The following points highlight his role as a representative poet:

Social Commentary: Chaucer's works offer a vivid portrayal of the social structure and dynamics of 14th-century England. In "The Canterbury Tales," he presents characters from various social classes and occupations, including knights, clergy, merchants, and peasants. Through their tales, Chaucer provides a glimpse into the daily lives, values, and aspirations of people from different strata of society, often critiquing social norms, prejudices, and hypocrisy.

Satire and Humor: One of Chaucer's hallmarks is his use of satire and humor to expose human follies and vices. His wit and keen observations of human behavior make his works enjoyable and thought-provoking. He often mocks the pretensions and corruption of religious figures, such as the Pardoner and the Friar, and highlights the moral shortcomings of various characters, thereby reflecting the moral ambiguities of his time.

Vernacular Language: Chaucer was among the first major poets to write in Middle English, the vernacular language of his time, rather than Latin or French, which were traditionally used for literary works. His choice of language made his poetry accessible to a broader audience and contributed significantly to the development of the English language and its literary tradition.

Realism and Psychological Insight: Chaucer's works are notable for their realism and attention to detail, as he masterfully captures the intricacies of human nature and emotions. His characters are multidimensional, with their own distinct personalities, motivations, and moral complexities. By delving into the minds of his characters, Chaucer provides readers with a deeper understanding of human nature and the human condition.

Influence of European Literature: Chaucer was well-versed in European literature and was influenced by various literary traditions, including French, Italian, and Latin. His works, such as "Troilus and Criseyde" and "The Book of the Duchess," showcase his familiarity with the works of authors like Boccaccio, Dante, and Ovid. By incorporating these influences, Chaucer enriched the English literary tradition and established himself as a cosmopolitan writer of his time.

Adaptability and Innovation: Chaucer was a versatile writer who experimented with different genres, styles, and narrative techniques. His ability to adapt and innovate, as seen in his use of the frame narrative in "The Canterbury Tales," allowed him to create engaging and memorable stories that resonated with readers across generations.

In conclusion, Geoffrey Chaucer is considered a representative poet of his age due to his ability to capture the essence of 14th-century England in his works. His keen observations of society, mastery of satire and

humor, use of vernacular language, psychological insights, and adaptability make him a seminal figure in the history of English literature.

4.11 "PROLOGUE TO CANTERBURY TALES" AS A PICTURE GALLERY

"The Prologue" to Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" can be viewed as a picture gallery, where each character is a portrait that contributes to the vivid representation of 14th- century English society. In this literary masterpiece, Chaucer presents a diverse group of 29 pilgrims who embark on a journey from London to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket in Canterbury. The "Prologue" serves as an introduction to these characters, providing readers with a rich and colorful depiction of their appearances, personalities, social backgrounds, and occupations. Here's how the "Prologue" functions as a picture gallery:

Diverse Representation: Chaucer's "Prologue" features characters from various social strata, ranging from the nobility (e.g., the Knight) to the religious clergy (e.g., the Prioress, the Monk, the Friar) and the middle class (e.g., the Merchant, the Wife of Bath) to the lower class (e.g., the Miller, the Plowman). This diverse representation offers a comprehensive snapshot of the social structure and interactions of the time.

Vivid Descriptions: Chaucer's descriptive prowess is evident in the "Prologue," where he paints vivid and memorable images of each character through their physical appearance, clothing, and demeanor. For instance, the Prioress is described as having a soft and tender heart, while the Wife of Bath is depicted as a lively and assertive woman with a bold fashion sense. These detailed descriptions bring the characters to life, much like a picture gallery would.

Satire and Social Commentary: Chaucer's portraits in the "Prologue" often serve as vehicles for social commentary and satire. For example, he exposes the hypocrisy and corruption within the Church by highlighting the worldly and materialistic pursuits of some religious figures, such as the Pardoner and the Summoner. Similarly, the interactions between the pilgrims reveal the prejudices and social tensions of the time, offering insights into the moral and ethical issues of the period.

Psychological Depth: The "Prologue" also delves into the psychological aspects of the characters, providing glimpses into their motivations, values, and moral complexities. For instance, the Knight is portrayed as a noble and chivalrous figure who values honor and duty, while the Reeve is depicted as a shrewd and cunning man who is skilled in manipulating others. These psychological insights add depth and dimension to the portraits, making them more engaging and relatable.

Unifying Frame: The "Prologue" serves as a unifying frame for the subsequent tales, much like a picture gallery that binds together individual works of art. The characters' introductions set the stage for the

stories they will tell, providing readers with a context for understanding the themes, morals, and perspectives of each tale. As the characters interact and engage in a storytelling competition, the "Prologue" connects their individual portraits into a coherent and captivating narrative.

In summary, the "Prologue" to "The Canterbury Tales" functions as a picture gallery, showcasing a diverse array of characters that reflect the social, political, and cultural realities of 14th-century England. Through vivid descriptions, satirical commentary, psychological depth, and a unifying frame, Chaucer creates a literary canvas that captures the essence of his time and continues to resonate with readers today.

4.12 REALISM IN THE POETRY OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Geoffrey Chaucer is celebrated for his realistic approach to poetry, which sets him apart from many of his contemporaries. Chaucer's works, especially "The Canterbury Tales," exemplify his skill in capturing the essence of the human experience, providing a vivid and detailed portrayal of life in 14th-century England. Realism in Chaucer's poetry can be observed in several key aspects:

Characterization: Chaucer's characters are renowned for their depth and complexity, which lend a sense of realism to his works. In "The Canterbury Tales," each pilgrim is introduced with a detailed portrait that highlights their appearance, profession, social status, and personality traits. These descriptions create a diverse group of characters, each with their own unique voice and perspective, allowing readers to recognize them as real individuals rather than mere stereotypes or archetypes.

Use of Everyday Language: Chaucer's use of the vernacular, or everyday language, contributes to the realism of his poetry. By writing in Middle English, Chaucer captures the speech patterns and dialects of the people he depicts, making the dialogue more authentic and relatable. This choice also reflects Chaucer's intention to make literature accessible to a broader audience, not just the educated elite.

Social and Cultural Commentary: Chaucer's works provide valuable insight into the social and cultural norms of his time, as well as the human condition. Through his characters, Chaucer explores various themes, such as love, marriage, religion, and social status, which are still relevant today. His often satirical and critical portrayal of various institutions, such as the church and the nobility, adds another layer of realism by highlighting the flaws and hypocrisies within society.

Psychological Realism: Chaucer's poetry delves into the inner workings of the human mind, exploring the emotions, motivations, and thoughts of his characters. This psychological realism is evident in works like "Troilus and Criseyde," where Chaucer examines the complexities of romantic love, jealousy, and

despair. Similarly, "The Canterbury Tales" offers glimpses into the minds of the pilgrims, who reveal their inner thoughts and desires through the tales they tell.

Attention to Detail: Chaucer's poetry is marked by a keen attention to detail, which contributes to the overall realism of his works. In "The Canterbury Tales," Chaucer employs precise and vivid descriptions of settings, objects, and events, which help to bring the world of the poem to life. This attention to detail also extends to Chaucer's portrayal of the various social classes, as he accurately depicts the customs, manners, and speech of each group.

In summary, realism in Geoffrey Chaucer's poetry can be observed in his intricate characterization, use of everyday language, social and cultural commentary, psychological insight, and meticulous attention to detail. These elements work together to create a vivid and engaging portrait of life in 14th-century England, making Chaucer's works enduring classics that continue to captivate and resonate with readers today.

4.13 CONTEMPORARY POETS OF CHAUCER: AN OVERVIEW

Geoffrey Chaucer, the Father of English Poetry, lived during a time of significant literary development in England. Some of his contemporaries also made notable contributions to English literature. Here are a few contemporary poets of Geoffrey Chaucer:

4.13.1 John Gower (1330-1408)

John Gower (1330-1408) was an important English poet and a close friend of Geoffrey Chaucer. Although he wrote in Latin, Anglo-Norman French, and Middle English, he is best known for his works in English. Gower's poetry, like Chaucer's, often dealt with moral and social issues of his time, and his writing demonstrated a deep understanding of human nature. His work was characterized by its narrative structure, classical influences, and careful attention to poetic form. Here are some aspects of Gower's poetry worth discussing:

Major works: Gower's most famous work is "Confessio Amantis" (Lover's Confession), a long narrative poem composed in octosyllabic couplets. This poem is a collection of moral tales about love, presented as a dialogue between a lover (Amans) and a confessor (Genius). Gower's other notable works include "Vox Clamantis" (The Voice of One Crying) and "Mirour de l'Omme" (The Mirror of Mankind), both of which were written in Latin.

Style and form: Gower's poetry is characterized by its narrative structure, and he often employed the framework of a dialogue or a confession to present his stories. His writing is marked by its adherence to poetic form, including the use of rhyme, meter, and other formal devices. Gower's style has been described as more conservative than Chaucer's, and his work often reflects the influence of classical sources, such as Ovid and Virgil.

Themes and content: Gower's poetry frequently deals with themes of morality, human nature, and the human condition. His works often explore the complexities of love, relationships, and the social and political issues of his time. Gower's poetry is didactic in nature, with a strong emphasis on teaching moral lessons through storytelling.

Influence and legacy: Gower's work had a significant impact on the development of English literature, and his influence can be seen in the writings of his contemporaries and successors. His friendship with Chaucer and their mutual admiration for each other's work further contributed to the growth and development of English poetry in the 14th century.

Language: Gower was one of the few poets of his time who wrote in multiple languages, including Latin, Anglo-Norman French, and Middle English. This linguistic versatility allowed him to reach different audiences and contributed to the standardization of the English language during a period of rapid linguistic change.

In conclusion, John Gower, as a poet, played an important role in the development of English literature during the 14th century. His works, characterized by their narrative structure, classical influences, and exploration of moral themes, had a significant impact on the writings of his contemporaries and successors. Gower's close friendship with Geoffrey Chaucer further solidified his place as a key figure in the evolution of English poetry.

4.13.2 William Langland (1332-1386)

William Langland (1332-1386) was an English poet who is presumed to be the author of "Piers Plowman," one of the most significant works of Middle English literature. Langland's work stands out for its allegorical and dreamlike qualities, its engagement with social, political, and religious themes, and its use of alliterative verse. Here are some aspects of Langland's poetry worth discussing:

Major work: Langland's most famous work, "Piers Plowman," is an allegorical dream vision poem composed in alliterative verse. The poem is divided into a series of dream sequences, or "passūs," in which the protagonist, Will, embarks on a spiritual journey to understand the nature of a good life and the

path to salvation. Throughout the poem, Langland introduces various allegorical characters, such as Piers Plowman, a Christ-like figure who represents the ideal Christian life.

Style and form: Langland's poetry is characterized by its use of alliterative verse, a style of poetry that employs repeated consonant sounds at the beginning of stressed syllables to create rhythm and structure. This poetic form, popular in Old and Middle English literature, distinguishes Langland's work from that of his contemporaries, such as Geoffrey Chaucer. Additionally, the allegorical nature of "Piers Plowman" adds a layer of complexity and depth to Langland's writing.

Themes and content: Langland's poetry is deeply concerned with social, political, and religious issues of his time. "Piers Plowman" explores themes such as the corruption of the Church, the nature of true Christian living, and the struggle between good and evil. Langland's work is also notable for its vivid and often satirical portrayal of various social classes, revealing his keen observation of contemporary society.

Influence and legacy: Although not as widely read as Chaucer's work, "Piers Plowman" has had a lasting impact on English literature. Its exploration of moral and spiritual themes, its innovative use of allegory, and its commitment to social critique have influenced later poets and writers. Langland's work is also significant for its contribution to the development of the English language, as "Piers Plowman" is one of the earliest surviving texts written in a form of Middle English closely related to the modern language.

Language: Langland's work is written in Middle English, which demonstrates the evolution of the English language during the 14th century. His use of dialect and vernacular language adds authenticity to his portrayal of characters from various social classes, contributing to the poem's overall realism and relatability.

In conclusion, William Langland, as a poet, played a crucial role in the development of English literature during the 14th century. His work, "Piers Plowman," is renowned for its allegorical nature, engagement with social and religious themes, and use of alliterative verse. Langland's poetry stands as a testament to the rich and varied literary landscape of medieval England and has left a lasting impact on the English literary tradition.

The Pearl Poet (14th Century)

The anonymous author of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," "Pearl," "Cleanness," and "Patience," often referred to as the Pearl Poet or the Gawain Poet, was a contemporary of Chaucer. The Pearl Poet is

known for the vivid descriptions of nature and courtly life, as well as the skillful use of alliteration in his writing.

4.13.3 John Barbour (1316-1395)

John Barbour (1316-1395) was a Scottish poet and the first major literary figure to write in Scots, the Middle Scots dialect of the English language. He is best known for his epic poem "The Brus," which celebrates the exploits of King Robert the Bruce and the Scottish Wars of Independence against England. As a poet, Barbour is considered the father of Scottish poetry and an essential figure in the development of early Scottish literature.

Barbour was born around 1316 in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. He was educated at the University of Oxford and the University of Paris, which equipped him with the knowledge and skills necessary to compose his literary works. Barbour later served as Archdeacon of Aberdeen, which allowed him access to historical records and documents that informed his poetry.

"The Brus," Barbour's most famous work, was completed around 1375. The poem consists of over 14,000 lines of octosyllabic couplets, a popular verse form in medieval literature. "The Brus" is a historical and patriotic epic that tells the story of Robert the Bruce and the Scottish Wars of Independence against England in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. The poem offers a blend of history, legend, and imaginative storytelling, providing a vivid account of the battles, heroism, and political intrigue of the period.

Linguistic and Cultural Identity: Barbour wrote in the Scots dialect, which played a significant role in establishing a distinct linguistic and cultural identity for Scottish literature. His work laid the foundation for later Scottish poets, such as Robert Henryson, William Dunbar, and Gavin Douglas.

Patriotism and Nationalism: "The Brus" is a celebration of Scottish patriotism and nationalism, extolling the virtues of heroism, resistance, and independence. The poem helped shape the collective memory of the Scottish people and contributed to the development of a national identity.

Literary Style and Technique: Barbour's poetry demonstrates a mastery of the octosyllabic couplet form, skillful storytelling, and vivid description. His work combines historical facts with literary elements such as characterization, dialogue, and dramatic scenes, which contributed to the development of an engaging and entertaining style of narrative poetry.

Influence on Later Literature: Barbour's work had a lasting impact on Scottish literature, inspiring later poets and writers to explore themes of patriotism, nationalism, and resistance. His influence can be seen in works such as Sir Walter Scott's historical novels and the poetry of Robert Burns.

In summary, John Barbour is a significant figure in the history of Scottish literature, known for his patriotic epic poem "The Brus." As a poet, Barbour played a crucial role in establishing a distinct linguistic and cultural identity for Scottish literature and laid the groundwork for the development of a rich and diverse literary tradition.

4.13.4 John Wycliffe (1320-1384)

John Wycliffe (1320-1384) was an influential theologian, philosopher, and religious reformer of the 14th century. Although he is not primarily known as a poet, Wycliffe's contribution to English literature is significant for his role in translating the Bible into English and his other religious writings. His work laid the foundation for the Lollard movement, which sought to democratize access to religious texts and promote the vernacular language. Here are some aspects of John Wycliffe's contributions to English literature:

Bible translation: Wycliffe's most important contribution to English literature is his translation of the Bible from Latin into Middle English. This was the first complete translation of the Bible into the English language, and it made the religious texts accessible to a wider audience of readers. Wycliffe's translation also helped to standardize and develop the English language during a period of rapid linguistic change.

Religious writings: In addition to his Bible translation, Wycliffe wrote numerous religious texts, including sermons, commentaries, and treatises. His writings often dealt with theological and philosophical issues, such as the nature of the Church, the role of the clergy, and the relationship between faith and reason. Although not explicitly poetic, Wycliffe's

writings demonstrate his mastery of language and his ability to communicate complex ideas in a clear and engaging manner.

The Lollard movement: Wycliffe's work laid the foundation for the Lollard movement, a religious and social reform movement that sought to democratize access to religious texts and promote the use of vernacular language in religious writing. The Lollards, who were followers of Wycliffe, produced their own vernacular religious writings, including sermons, hymns, and devotional texts, which contributed to the development of English literature during the 14th and 15th centuries.

Influence and legacy: Although Wycliffe was not a poet in the traditional sense, his work had a significant impact on the development of English literature. His translation of the Bible and his other religious writings contributed to the growth and standardization of the English language, paving the way for later poets and writers, including Geoffrey Chaucer. Additionally, the Lollard movement, which Wycliffe inspired, played a crucial role in promoting vernacular literature and democratizing access to religious texts.

In conclusion, John Wycliffe's contributions to English literature are significant, despite his not being a poet in the conventional sense. His work as a translator of the Bible and his other religious writings helped to standardize and develop the English language, laying the groundwork for later English poets and writers. Furthermore, Wycliffe's influence on the Lollard movement played a crucial role in the democratization of access to religious texts and the promotion of vernacular literature during the 14th and 15th centuries.

4.13.5 The Wakefield Master (14th Century)

The Wakefield Master, an anonymous playwright, is known for his work in the Wakefield Mystery Plays, a cycle of medieval religious drama. The plays are notable for their wit, humor, and vivid characterization, which reflect the influence of Chaucer and other contemporary poets.

These poets, contemporary to Geoffrey Chaucer, contributed to the growth and development of English literature during the 14th century. Their works demonstrate a diverse range of themes, styles, and forms, reflecting the rich and evolving literary landscape of their time.

4.14 SCOTTISH CHAUCERIAN: AN OVERVIEW

The term "Scottish Chaucerians" refers to a group of Scottish poets who were heavily influenced by the works of Geoffrey Chaucer, the Father of English Poetry, and who contributed to the development of English literature during the 15th and 16th centuries. These poets adopted and adapted Chaucer's style, themes, and language, helping to shape the literary landscape of Scotland and fostering the growth of vernacular literature in both Scotland and England. Here are some of the key Scottish Chaucerians and their contributions to English literature:

4.14.1 Robert Henryson (1425-1500)

Henryson was a prominent Scottish poet and one of the most important figures in the Chaucerian tradition. His works, such as "The Testament of Cresseid" and "The Morall Fabillis of Esope the Phrygian," demonstrated his mastery of Chaucer's style and language. Henryson's poetry often dealt with moral and social issues, and he skillfully combined humor, wit, and allegory in his works.

4.14.2 William Dunbar (1460-1520)

Dunbar was a versatile and prolific Scottish poet who wrote in various styles and genres. His works, such as "The Thrissil and the Rois," "The Golden Targe," and "The Lament for the Makars," showcased his engagement with Chaucerian themes and forms. Dunbar's poetry was marked by its rich imagery, linguistic inventiveness, and keen observation of contemporary society.

4.14.3 Gavin Douglas (1474-1522)

Douglas, a Scottish bishop and poet, was best known for his translation of Virgil's "Aeneid" into Middle Scots, a major literary achievement of the time. His other works, such as "The Palice of Honour," demonstrated his skill in handling Chaucerian language and style. Douglas's poetry was characterized by its vivid descriptions, allegorical content, and classical influences.

4.14.4 James I of Scotland (1394-1437)

As both a king and a poet, James I contributed to the development of English literature through his work "The Kingis Quair." This allegorical dream vision poem was heavily influenced by Chaucer's "The Book of the Duchess" and demonstrated James's familiarity with Chaucerian language, themes, and poetic forms.

The Scottish Chaucerians Made Several Significant Contributions To English Literature

Adoption and adaptation of Chaucerian style and language: By adopting and adapting Chaucer's style, themes, and language, the Scottish Chaucerians helped to popularize and preserve Chaucer's literary legacy in both Scotland and England.

Development of vernacular literature: The Scottish Chaucerians played a crucial role in the development of vernacular literature in Scotland, helping to shape the literary landscape of the country and fostering the growth of the Scots language.

Influence on later writers: The works of the Scottish Chaucerians left a lasting impact on the literary tradition in Scotland and England, influencing later poets and writers, such as Sir David Lyndsay, Robert Burns, and Sir Walter Scott.

In conclusion, the Scottish Chaucerians made substantial contributions to English literature by adopting and adapting the style, themes, and language of Geoffrey Chaucer. Their works played a crucial role in the development of vernacular literature in Scotland and helped to shape the literary landscape of both Scotland and England. The Scottish Chaucerians' influence on later poets and writers ensured that their contributions to English literature would be remembered for centuries to come.

4.15 LET'S US SUM UP

In this unit, learners explore the profound contributions of Geoffrey Chaucer and other prominent poets of the late Middle Ages to English literature. The unig examines Chaucer's influential works, particularly The Canterbury Tales, highlighting his innovative use of the English vernacular and his exploration of a wide range of social classes, human experiences, and literary forms. The unit also introduces key contemporaries such as John Gower, William Langland, and the anonymous author of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, emphasizing their impact on medieval English literary traditions. Through this study, learners gain an understanding of how Chaucer and his contemporaries helped shape the transition from the medieval period to the early Renaissance in English literature. They learn about the themes of morality, social commentary, and religious exploration that characterized this literary era, as well as the development of narrative techniques and poetic forms, such as the iambic pentameter. By the end of the unit, learners will be able to identify the significant contributions of Chaucer and his contemporaries, understand their influence on the development of English literature, and appreciate the cultural, social, and linguistic shifts that occurred during this transformative period in literary history.

4.16 Questions

1. How did Geoffrey Chaucer's use of the English vernacular in The Canterbury Tales influence the development of English literature?

2. Discuss the significance of social class and human experience as central themes in Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales. How do these themes reflect the society of his time?

3. What are the key narrative techniques employed by Chaucer in The Canterbury Tales, and how do they differ from the literary styles of earlier medieval writers?

4. Who were Chaucer's major contemporaries, such as John Gower and William Langland, and how did their works contribute to the literary landscape of the late Middle Ages?

5. Examine the themes of morality and religious exploration in William Langland's Piers Plowman. How do these themes compare with those in Chaucer's works?

6. In what ways does Sir Gawain and the Green Knight reflect the medieval chivalric tradition, and how does this work compare to Chaucer's exploration of social and moral issues?

7. What innovations in poetic form, such as the use of iambic pentameter, did Chaucer introduce to English literature, and how did these innovations influence later poets?

8. How did Chaucer and his contemporaries contribute to the transition from medieval to Renaissance literature in England?

4.17 Further Readings

"A History of English Literature" by Michael Alexander

"The Norton Anthology of English Literature" edited by M.H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt

"The Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature" edited by Pat Rogers

"The Cambridge History of English Literature" edited by A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller

"The English Novel: An Introduction" by Terry Eagleton

"The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English" edited by Peter France and Stuart Gillespie

"The Literature of the English Renaissance" by Kenneth Muir

"The Romantic Movement in English Poetry" by Arthur Symons

"English Literature a Survey for Students" by Burgess, Anthony

"Longman Companion to English Literature" by Gillie, Christopher

"The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales" by F.N. Robins

MAEN - 108 N

Major Trends and Movements in English Literature -I

MAEN-108 (N)
MAJOR TRENDS AND MOVEMENTS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE-I

INTRODUCTION TO BLOCK II

Dear learners! This block is aimed at making you aware Renaissance and Elizabethan Period. This block is divided into four units from 5th to 8th. The fifth unit focuses on the first two major movements in English history and literature: Renaissance and Reformation. The Renaissance and Reformation are two related historical movement that took place roughly from the 14th to 17th centuries. Both periods represent a time when Europe moved away from traditional society. The sixth unit aimed to discuss evolution of drama and University Wits. The University Wits played a vital role in the development of English drama, and their style. The unit also deals the major works University Wits: George Peele, Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe, John Lyly, Thomas Lodge and Christopher Marlowe. Thomas Kyd is sometimes included in the group, even though he wasn't from either Oxford or Cambridge. The University Wits were known for their wit, poetic power, and structural coherence, and they paved the way for William Shakespeare. The seventh unit focuses on Shakespeare and his works. It deals with the biography, works and contribution in English Drama. The eighth and last unit of the block focuses on Edmund Spenser. Philip Sydney, Ben Jonson and other important writers of Elizabethan period. After studying this block, you will be able to understand the philosophical and realist way of thinking about life and develop the conceptual analytical power to read and enjoy the soul of English Drama.

UNIT 5 RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

Structure

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss the Renaissance and Reformation movement. In addition to this, we shall also discuss the intellectual, social and political reasons that influenced these two periods and provide a fruitful direction to its subsequent development. After reading this unit carefully, you will be able to:

- Understand the main trends in Renaissance Movement
- Describe the reasons in the development of Renaissance Movement;
- Discuss the historical background of the Reformation.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to study The Renaissance and The Reformation movement from its initial point of development with historical background. Renaissance was a period in European history, spanning roughly from the 14th to the 17th century. It marked a revival of classical learning and wisdom. The Reformation was a significant religious and political movement in 16th-century Europe that led to the establishment of Protestantism as a major branch of Christianity. It was a watershed moment in European history, shaping the religious, political, and cultural dynamics of the continent and beyond. The term Renaissance and Reformation are generally used to describe period of Transformation. It was a revival of art and literature in Europe during 14th to 16th centuries based on ancient Greek learning. It was a series of events extending over two centuries and transforming the medieval into modern. Reformation was a significant religious and political movement which dawned in mast of the European countries in the sixteenth century in order to reform the vices of Catholic Church. Do go through all the sections and answer the questions given in 'Check Your Progress'. This will help you to remember what you have read and also give you some practice in expressing yourself in your own words. We do hope you enjoy working through this Unit.

5.2 RENAISSANCE PERIOD: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

The term Renaissance is a French word which means rebirth of reawaken. It is made from two words 'Re' means again and 'naissance' means birth. Here a question arises who was born? It was human spirit was reborn or reawakened after long sleep of the middle Ages. It was a revival of ancient and classical mythology culture as literature and reawaking of human mind. It was a period of great illumination in the life of humanity. Renaissance began in Italy as early as the fourteenth century with Petrarch and others. It was greatly stimulated the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and by Invention of Printing in Germany about this very time. Renaissance period is a profound transformation characterized by a revival of classical themes and forms, as well as an increased focus on humanism and individualism.

The Renaissance emerged in the wake of the Middle Ages, a period often characterized by feudalism, religious dogma, and limited intellectual exploration. Some cities like Florence, Venice, and Rome became hubs of wealth due to trade and commerce, fostering a wealthy merchant class who patronized the arts and scholarship. Several scholars began to rediscover and study classical texts from ancient Greece and Rome, which had largely been neglected during the Middle Ages. This step emphasized the importance of human reason, individualism, and the potential for human achievement. Humanists sought to reconcile Christian teachings with classical wisdom. Petrarch (1304-1374) and

Boccaccio (1313-1375) promoted the study of classical literature and history. Michelangelo, and Raphael produced their masterpieces, showcasing technical skill and classical themes. Thomas More (1478-1535) promoted humanist values through their works.

In short, the Renaissance was not a sudden event but rather a gradual transformation influenced by economic prosperity, intellectual curiosity, and a renewed interest in classical learning. Its legacy includes advancements in art, science, literature, and philosophy, setting the stage for the modern era's emphasis on human potential and innovation. The period's influence extended far beyond Italy, shaping the course of European history and laying the groundwork for subsequent intellectual and cultural movements.

5.3 CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS OF RENAISSANCE PERIOD

Renaissance is undoubtedly one of the most glorious periods in English literature. Renaissance stands for learning, broad mindedness, progressiveness, free-thinking, nobility in thought and human action and enlightenment. The new scientific discoveries and inventions provided much scope for the proliferation of human thinking in every walk of life. Whereas in the Middle Ages the universe was God-centered and Church-centered, in the Renaissance man and earth became the focal points. Here are some key literary aspects of the Renaissance:

> - Theo-centric to homocentric
> - Beauty of body
> - Literary activities and aesthetic sense
> - Development of new literature

The chief characteristics of the Renaissance can be counted in the following ways. First the Renaissance meant the death of medieval learning and there was a revolt against the authority of the Pope. Secondly, the Renaissance brought about a greater appreciation of beauty and polish in Greek and Latin scholars. Thirdly, the Renaissance marked a change from the theocentric to the homocentric conception of the universe. Some important points are:

Humanism: Renaissance literature was deeply influenced by humanist philosophy, which emphasized the study of classical texts and a focus on human potential and achievement. Humanists sought to reconcile Christian teachings with classical wisdom, leading to a renewed interest in the works of ancient Greek and Roman writers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero.

Classical Influences: Renaissance writers often drew inspiration from classical literature, mythology, and history. They imitated classical forms such as the epic, the ode, and the pastoral, adapting them to reflect contemporary concerns and values.

Individualism: Renaissance literature celebrated the individual and his/her experiences, feelings, and thoughts. Writers explored themes of personal identity, self-discovery, and the complexities of human emotions. This shift towards a more subjective and introspective approach marked a departure from the medieval focus on collective identity and religious themes.

Secularism: While religious themes continued to be important, Renaissance literature increasingly explored secular subjects such as love, beauty, nature, and the human condition. This secular turn reflected broader cultural changes as Europe emerged from the Middle Ages and rediscovered the world and its possibilities.

Innovation in Form and Style: Renaissance writers experimented with new literary forms and techniques. The sonnet, for example, became a popular poetic form, with Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnets being prime examples. Playwrights like William Shakespeare revolutionized drama with their complex characters, rich language, and exploration of universal themes.

Literary Patronage: The patronage of wealthy individuals, such as the Medici family in Florence, played a crucial role in supporting writers and artists during the Renaissance. This patronage enabled writers to pursue their craft and produce works that celebrated human creativity and intellect.

Impact of Printing Press: The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in the mid-15th century facilitated the rapid dissemination of ideas and texts. This technological advancement contributed to the spread of Renaissance literature across Europe and helped shape a shared cultural identity

Points to Remember

Renaissance means re-birth or reawakening. The Italian word Rinascenza or Rinascimenta is the equivalent of Renaissance.

(ii) The historical period following the middle ages, that is, from the 13th century to the 17th century is the span of the Renaissance.

(iii)   Before Renaissance, came the medieval ages (5th to 15th century) and afterwards came me Enlightenment or the Age of Reason.

(iv) There was a rediscovery of classical literature, particularly of Greece and Rome.

(v)   It renewed the idea that human existence was not just a painful preparation for after-life but had an interest and value in itself.

(vi) The new humanism brought by the Renaissance was supported by and found expression in creativity in literature, science, art, geography, commerce and political expansion.

(vii) The important writers of the Renaissance were Philip Sydney, Sir Wyatt, William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser and Milton; the great artists are Michel Angelo, Raphael, Leonardo de Vinci.

(viii) The Universe became homocentric instead of theocentric as it was in the medieval ages.

In short, Renaissance literature represents a period of intellectual ferment and cultural renewal, characterized by a rediscovery of classical learning, a celebration of human potential, and an exploration of new literary forms and styles. It laid the groundwork for the development of modern literature and continues to inspire readers and scholars today.

5.4 IMPACT OF THE RENAISSANCE ON LITERATURE

The literature of the Renaissance flourished at a great speed because the boundaries created by religion were being demolished rapidly. The English writers were having access to the literatures of Italy, France and Germany. In every field of literature there was commotion. Whether it was drama or poetry or prose, England was marching ahead very fast. The plays of Shakespeare, Marlowe and the University Wits had great influence on the life of the Elizabethan people. In the field of prose also there was much progress as is witnessed in the writings of Sir Francis Bacon, Richard Hooker, Sir Philip Sidney, and Sir Walter Raleigh. In the field of poetry too we have a number of great poets whose writings are unsurpassed. The famous poets such as Sir Philip Sydney, Thomas Wyatt, William Shakespeare and Spenser are undoubtedly the best flowers of the Renaissance.

As is a well known and much acknowledged fact that literature is the product of the spirit of the age in which it is written. The literature of the Renaissance does not hold any exception to this universal fact. All the chief characteristics of the movement get mirrored in the literature of the Renaissance period. For the sake of convenience we shall take into account the famous writers of the period and their works in our discussion. So far as the chief characteristics are concerned, they have been duly demonstrated in all the genres of literature:

(i) Humanistic Impulse

As has been pointed out by many a critic that Renaissance gave birth to a new kind of humanism in England and Europe. During the medieval period human values and ideals were crushed ruthlessly. Religion and Church were so dominant and powerful that they put to death all human aspirations, longings and yearnings. Those who tried to. be rational and logical were tortured and executed. The wave of Renaissance liberated man from the age-old conventions and dehumanising shackles of theology. This new spirit is well reflected and amply illustrated in the literature of the period William Shakespeare's plays and poems corroborate the fact that humanistic ideal had got the primary place in the minds of the writers. Shakespeare's sonnets, which are 154 in number, bring forth all the facets of life. He talks of love, beauty, time, age and human values in his immortal sonnets. Love was not a word which was to be uttered in the privacy of bed-rooms and personal chambers. In one of his sonnets Shakespeare beautifully compares. the beloved's beauty to a day of the summer-season:

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day

Thou art more lovely and more temperate".

In his comedies, tragedies and historical plays Shakespeare speaks of the glory of human body and mind. His characters are the master of their destinies. They are not governed by any external agency such as Fate, Chance or gods and goddesses. In his tragedies such as Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth, the heroes and heroines fall prey to their own actions. Hamlet has to die because of his procrastinating tendencies. It is a tragedy of great importance because the character of Hamlet is caught between two mutually opposite forces-religious moorings on the one hand and the reawakening of human potetialities on the other in one place, Hamlet speaks of his dilemma in these words:

"To be or not to be, that is the question"

The other dramatists such as Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Kyd, and Ben Jonson have also revealed the humanistic approach of the Renaissance man. Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy and Marlowe's Doctor Faustus and Tamburlaine present the pictures of the ideals and ambitions which had taken the human brain into their grips in the Renaissance.

(ii) Stress on Human Body and Individualism

The literature of the period gives ample proof that during the Renaissance, man had started taking keen interest in human body and individualistic pursuits. Shakespeare's heroes have towering personalities. They are projected into the world to clear the corruption and sinful acts from the surface of the earth.

Hamlet is given the responsibility of purging the sin that has crept into the state of Denmark. Macbeth is a noble man but his over-ambition guided by his wife Lady Macbeth leads him to the edge of death and destruction. These heroes imbibe the true spirit of the Renaissance. They think that they can set the world right single-handedly. Hamlet's famous words remind us the actual thinking of the Renaissance man, 'What a piece of work is man!"

(iii) Boundless Ambition:

The literature of the Renaissance period opens before us a new type of characters who are over-ambitious. For them sky is the limit. The plays of Marlowe give us marvellous characters. Doctor Faustus is the product of the real Renaissance spirit. He sells his soul to the Devil for twenty four years to gain all the comforts of the world. He does not hesitate from signing a bond to the Devil who becomes the real master of his soul. His famous words echo the ambition, aspiration and cravings of the Renaissance man:

"All things that move between the two poles shall be at my command!'

In short, the above discussion makes it crystal clear that Renaissance had a vigorous and far-reaching impact not only on the minds of the people but also on the literature of the period. There are reflections of the Renaissance in the literature of the period. Since Renaissance had a revolutionary effect on all walks of life, it left its mark on the literary works of the writers also. We shall end this discussion with a famous quotation of Hudson: "The Renaissance was the revolt of the whole man-mind and body alike-against the despotism of creed, traditions and arbitrary authority."

5.5 IMPORTANT WRITERS OF RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

During the Renaissance period, literature flourished across Europe, reflecting the era's humanist ideals, renewed interest in classical texts, and evolving social and political landscapes. Here's a detailed exploration of some of the most important writers of Renaissance literature:

5.5.1 Dante Alighieri (1265-1321)

Dante was a well known Italian poet, writer, and philosopher. Dante is known for establishing the use of the vernacular in literature. His most famous work is *"The Divine Comedy,"* an epic poem that describes the journey of the narrator through Hell (Inferno), Purgatory (Purgatorio), and Paradise (Paradiso). It is a seminal work in Italian literature and showcases his mastery of language and symbolism. His writings contributed to the development of the Italian language as a literary medium and influenced later poets and writers across Europe.

5.5.2 Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374)

Petrarch was a scholar and poet of the early Italian Renaissance and one of the earliest humanists. His rediscovery of Cicero's letters is often credited with initiating the 14th-century Italian Renaissance and the founding of Renaissance humanism. *He* often considered the father of humanism, wrote numerous sonnets and lyric poems. His collection "Canzoniere" (Songbook) is famous for its exploration of love, beauty, and the longing for spiritual fulfillment. His emphasis on individualism and the revival of classical ideals inspired humanist thought and laid the groundwork for Renaissance literature.

5.5.3 Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375)

Giovanni Boccaccio was an Italian writer, poet, correspondent of Petrarch, and an important Renaissance humanist. His most famous work is "The Decameron," a collection of 100 novellas told by a group of young people sheltering in a villa outside Florence during the Black Death. It reflects Boccaccio's keen observation of human behavior and societal critique. "The Decameron" is celebrated for its narrative innovation, realism, and depiction of human passions and frailties. It influenced the development of the modern short story.

5.5.4 Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616)

Miguel de Cervantes was an Early Modern Spanish writer widely regarded as the greatest writer in the Spanish language and one of the world's pre-eminent novelists. He is best known for "Don Quixote," a novel that satirizes chivalric romance and explores themes of idealism versus reality. It is considered one of the greatest works of fiction ever written. It is a pioneering work of modern literature, blending humor, social commentary, and psychological insight. It influenced the development of the novel as a literary form.

5.5.5 Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1340-1400)

Geoffrey Chaucer was an English poet, author, and civil servant. His masterpiece is "The Canterbury Tales," a collection of stories told by pilgrims on their way to Canterbury Cathedral. It offers a panoramic view of English society through its diverse characters and narrative styles. His use of English vernacular contributed significantly to the development of Middle English literature and marked a departure from the dominance of French and Latin in medieval literature.

5.5.6 William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

William Shakespeare was an English playwright, poet and actor. He is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon" (or simply "the Bard"). His plays, including tragedies like "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and "King Lear," comedies such as "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Twelfth Night," and histories like "Henry V" and "Richard III," are considered some of the greatest works in English literature. His mastery of language, character, and dramatic structure transcends time and has had a profound influence on literature, theater, and the English language itself. His works are divided as:

Tragedies: "Hamlet," "Othello," "King Lear," "Macbeth.

"Comedies: "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Twelfth Night," "Much Ado About Nothing.

"Histories: "Henry V," "Richard III," "King John.

"Poetry: Sonnets and narrative poems like "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece."

5.5.7 John Milton (1608-1674)

John Milton was an English poet, polemicist, and civil servant. His epic poem "Paradise Lost" recounts the biblical story of the Fall of Man, exploring themes of free will, temptation, and redemption. His other major works include "Paradise Regained" and "Samson Agonistes." His poetic style, theological depth, and exploration of moral and political issues have made him a seminal figure in English literature. "Paradise Lost" remains a cornerstone of Western literary tradition.

5.5.8 Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)

Christopher Marlowe was an English playwright, poet, and translator of the Elizabethan era. He is among the most famous of the Elizabethan playwrights. His most famous play is "Doctor Faustus". It is a tragedy depicting the fall of a scholar who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for knowledge and power. It explores themes of ambition, knowledge, and the human condition.

5.5.9 Edmund Spenser (1552-1599)

Edmund Spenser was an English poet best known for *The Faerie Queene*, an epic poem and fantastical allegory . *He is recognized as one of the premier craftsmen who considered one of the great poets in the English language.* The Faerie Queene" is an epic poem celebrating Queen Elizabeth I and the virtues of chivalry. It is allegorical and explores themes of virtue, honor, and political allegiances.

In short, these writers and their works exemplify the diversity of literary achievements during the Renaissance, reflecting the era's fascination with humanism, classical learning, and the complexities of human experience. Their contributions continue to shape literature and thought across the globe.

5.6 REFORMATION: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

The Reformation was a religious movement in Europe. The term 'Reformation is closely associated with another term of significance, the 'Renaissance. Whereas the Renaissance was mainly a literary movement the Reformation was related to reforms in the field of religion. It was a revolt against the deeply established Roman Catholic Church in the 16th Century With the passage of time there entered a number of vices and abuses in The Church. The aim of the Reformation was to re-establish the past glory of the Church and remove all those deficiencies which had weakened the solid foundations of Christianity. The Reformation, just like the Renaissance, set in the spirit of enquiry in the spheres of religions. It shattered the medieval scholastic shackles The limitations and heavy weight of ignorance were removed on account of the reforms brought about by this new spirit. The Reformation became responsible for the induction of a simpler and more spiritual form of Christianity.

Christianity underwent a profound crisis before the onset of the Reformation movement. The Church did not had anything which may inspire the growth of human mind. In other words the Church officials had grown corrupt, degenerate and impure. A fair picture of the corruption in the Church has been reflected in Geoffrey Chaucer's Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. Chaucer has well depicted the corruption prevalent in the church through his memorable characters such as the Summoner, the Pardoner and other religious characters. The Church had interference in all walks of life, and laid down principles for the guidance of government and society, marriage and family. In other words the Church became the guardian of eternal truth. The Pope of Rome had the supreme authority; the root cause of corruption, despotism and the tyranny, was centered around the supremacy of the Catholic Church.

5.6.1 Reformation: A Product of as well as a Reaction Against the Renaissance

Both the Reformation and Renaissance were the products of the same spirit of freedom and new consciousness about life. The Reformation was one of the many facets of the Renaissance. It can be said that the Reformation was both the product of as well as a reaction against the reawakening brought about by the Renaissance in human life, which was overburdened with the dead weight of medieval theology and dogmatism. The Renaissance assumed a religious character in Germany.

The Reformation was a reaction against the Renaissance in the sense that it tried to check its decay and licentiousness in Italy. Italy had degenerated morally. This degeneration is manifested in several ways. Under the new got freedom Italy became a land of immorality, crime and opportunism. Since the Renaissance and the Reformation came from Italy to England in the 16th century simultaneously, the English literature did not suffer the impact of degeneration of the Renaissance. The Reformation stood for spiritual and religious fervor, morality, austerity, discipline and the love of virtue. The Renaissance on the other hand, stood for sensuousness, love of beauty, passion for learning and humanism.

5.7 IMPACT OF THE REFORMATION ON LITERATURE

The Reformation also left its undeniable marks on the body of English literature just like the Renaissance did. The chief characteristics of the Reformation such as high-seriousness, love of virtue, the spirit of nationalism and patriotism, spiritual and religious fervour and lofty aim are to be found in ample measure in the literature of the Reformation. The two great dramatists of the period namely William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson share the chief qualities of the Reformation in their work. William Shakespeare, for example, gives expression to the spirit of the Reformation in his wonderful plays. His dramas, particularly his historical plays, express the spirit of patriotism and nationalism. Even in his comedies and tragedies, Shakespeare arrests the new spirit of the Reformation. For example, the character of Malvolio in The Twelfth Night stands for moral austerity and discipline coupled with love of virtue and spirituality. The other characters such as Duke Orsino, Olivia, including Sir Toby, have the degenerating qualities of the Renaissance. Ben Jonson, the other great dramatist of the period, is the true child of the Reformation. In his plays he attacks the human weaknesses mercilessly. The third great dramatist of the period has the spirit of the Reformation in no less quantity, and he is Christopher Marlowe. In his plays, he exposes the littleness of human ambition in an artistic way. His great tragedy *Doctor Faustus* has the central character of Doctor Faustus who is devoted to the study of necromancy. He wants to have the power and pelf of the entire world. His great fall underlines the glaring spirit of the Reformation, that is, too much or excess of anything is bad.

The Reformation influenced the poets also. The resurgence of the religious and patriotic spirit gets its full manifestation in the poetry of the period. John Milton, John Donne, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Richard Crashaw and Andrew Marvell are the major poets of the Reformation. Milton's two great epics Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained embody the spirit of the Reformation with their religious theme related to the story of the origin of the world in the Holy Bible. Satan is the main character of the poem. Through him, Milton specifies the fact that disobedience is a great sin. The metaphysical poets, particularly John Donne, have written a good body of religious poetry laying emphasis on spiritual

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quality. But Edmund Spenser is the finest flower of the spirit of the Renaissance and the Reformation. His Faerie Queen is a great poem. The knights in the Books of the Faerie Queen want to establish a moral order in a degenerated world. The Reformation had a profound impact on literature during the 16th century and beyond. Here are several key ways in which it influenced literary developments:

Religious Themes and Content:

The Reformation sparked intense theological debates and religious fervor, which found expression in literature. Writers began to explore religious themes more openly, often challenging established orthodoxies and exploring personal faith experiences. For example, John Milton's epic poem "Paradise Lost" reflects Protestant views on sin, redemption, and the relationship between humanity and God.

Spread of Vernacular Literature:

One of the significant outcomes of the Reformation was the emphasis on translating religious texts into the vernacular languages (such as German, English, French). This led to a broader literacy among the general population and an increase in the production of literature in native languages rather than Latin. Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German is a prime example of this shift.

Literary Forms and Styles:

The Reformation era witnessed experimentation with new literary forms and styles. Writers explored different genres, adapting classical forms to convey religious messages or using literature as a means to advocate for social and political change. This period saw the rise of religious allegory, spiritual autobiography, and the development of modern prose styles.

Impact on Education and Thought:

The emphasis on individual interpretation of religious texts promoted critical thinking and intellectual inquiry. This intellectual ferment extended to literature, fostering a climate where writers sought to engage readers intellectually and emotionally, often challenging traditional literary conventions and norms.

Legacy and Long-term Influence:

The Reformation's influence on literature extended far beyond the 16th century. It laid the groundwork for the development of modern literature and contributed to the shaping of cultural identities across Europe. The legacy of Reformation literature can still be seen in the ongoing exploration of religious

themes, the role of the individual in society, and the enduring impact of theological debates on literature and intellectual discourse.

In short, the Reformation had a multifaceted impact on literature, influencing themes, language, forms, and the intellectual climate of the time. It not only transformed religious beliefs and practices but also left a lasting imprint on the literary landscape of Europe and beyond.

5.8 IMPORTANT WRITERS OF REFORMATION PERIOD

During the Reformation period in England, several influential writers emerged who played significant roles in shaping religious, political, and literary developments. Here are some of the most important writers:

5.8.1 William Tyndale (1494-1536)

Tyndale was an English scholar and theologian who is best known for his translation of the Bible into English. His translation was the first to be printed in English and was a foundational text for the Protestant Reformation in England. His work greatly influenced subsequent English translations of the Bible, including the King James Version.

5.8.2 Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556)

As Archbishop of Canterbury, Cranmer played a crucial role in the English Reformation under Henry VIII and Edward VI. He authored the Book of Common Prayer, which standardized worship in the Church of England and influenced Anglican liturgy. Cranmer's theological writings and his support for Protestant reforms were central to shaping the Church of England.

5.8.3 Thomas More (1478-1535)

More was an English lawyer, philosopher, and statesman who initially supported Catholic doctrines and opposed the Reformation. His most famous work, "Utopia" (1516), is a political and social satire that critiques contemporary society and explores ideas of justice and governance. His execution for opposing Henry VIII's break with the Catholic Church underscored the religious and political tensions of the Reformation.

5.8.4 John Donne (1572-1631)

Donne was an English poet, cleric, and later Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. His early works reflect his Catholic upbringing and later conversion to Anglicanism. His poetry often explores themes of faith, love, and mortality, reflecting the spiritual and intellectual currents of the Reformation era.

5.8.5 Richard Hooker (1554–1600)

Hooker was an Anglican theologian and influential writer whose work "Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity" (1593) defended the Elizabethan Settlement. He argued for the compatibility of Anglican theology with reason and tradition, contributing to the theological foundation of the Church of England. His writings were instrumental in shaping Anglican doctrine and ecclesiastical governance.

In short, these writers, each in their own way, contributed to the intellectual, religious, and literary developments of the Reformation period in England. Their works continue to be studied for their theological insights, political implications, and literary merit, making them enduring figures in English and religious history.

5.9 LET'S US SUM UP

In this Unit we have discussed certain topics that will be helpful in approaching the Renaissance and the Reformation Movements . We have given you:

a detail introduction to Renaissance and the Reformation Movements

an idea to understand the origin and development of The Renaissance and the Reformation Movements

a detail discussion on major writers of Renaissance and the Reformation Movements .

a brief guidelines on how to read a play.

5.10 QUESTIONS

Analyze the artistic innovations of the Renaissance with reference to specific works and artists.

Discuss the role of humanism in shaping Renaissance thought and education.

Define the Renaissance and explain its significance in European history.

What was the Renaissance? Where did the it begin?

What were some key features of Renaissance art?

Who were some prominent figures of the Renaissance?

What role did humanism play in the Renaissance?

How did the Renaissance impact society? What were the long-term effects of it?

What was the Reformation? What were the causes of the Reformation?

Who were some key figures of the Reformation?

What were the main beliefs of Protestantism?

How did the Reformation impact European society and politics?

What were the effects of the Reformation on art and culture?

How did the Catholic Church respond to the Reformation?

What is the legacy of the Reformation today?

5.11 FURTHER READINGS

Mundra. S.C. *A Compendious History of English Literature.* Prakash Book Depot. Bareilly

Singh. Dr. Raghavendra. *Introduction to Movements, Ages, and Literary Forms.* Viswavidyalaya Prakasan, Varanasi. 2004

Tilak, Dr. Raghukul. *History of English Literature.* Rajhans Publication,

Trivedi, R. D. *A Compendious History of English Literature.* Vikash Publishing House. New Delhi. 1976

UNIT 6 EVOLUTION OF DRAMA AND UNIVERSITY WITS

Structure

6.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss the origin and development of Drama and role of University Wits in it. In addition to this, we shall also discuss the intellectual, social and political reasons that influenced restoration period gave a certain direction to its subsequent development. After reading this unit carefully, you will be able to:

- Understand the main trends in development of Drama and role of University Wits;
- Describe the reasons in the development of Drama;
- Discuss the historical background of the development of Drama and role of University Wits in English Drama.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to begin to read the origin and development of drama from its initial point with historical background. It is only then that we will be able to experience the play in its different dimensions: as 'literature' as well as 'theatre'. Do go through all the sections and answer the questions given in 'Check Your Progress'. This will help you to remember what you have read and also give you some practice in expressing yourself in your own words. We do hope you enjoy working through this unit.

6.2 DEFINITION OF DRAMA

Drama, in its broadest sense, refers to a genre of narrative fiction characterized by conflict, tension, and emotion. It often explores serious themes and portrays the personal and social struggles of its characters. Drama typically involves dialogue and action that create a story with various plot developments, aiming to engage and evoke emotional responses from its audience. It can range from intense tragedy to lighter comedic forms, but at its core, drama focuses on human experience and interaction in a compelling and often impactful way.

6.3 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH DRAMA

The origin of the drama is deep-rooted in the religious predispositions of humanity. The ancient Greek and Roman dramas were mostly concerned with the religious ceremonials of people. The origin and development of drama can be traced back to ancient civilizations, particularly in Greece. Here's a brief overview of its evolution:

Drama finds its roots in ancient Greek theater, which emerged around the 6th century BCE. Greek drama was initially part of religious festivals honoring Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility. These festivals included performances of tragedies and comedies, which were staged in open-air amphitheaters. The two main forms of Greek drama were tragedy and comedy: **Tragedy** explored serious themes such as fate, morality, and the human condition. They often focused on the downfall of a heroic figure due to a tragic flaw. **Comedy** deals satirical and humorous, often mocking politicians, intellectuals, and societal norms.

The Romans adopted and adapted Greek theater, incorporating their own cultural and political themes. Roman drama, while similar in structure to Greek theater, often focused more on farce and spectacle. After the decline of classical civilizations, theater evolved differently in medieval Europe. During the Middle Ages, drama was largely religious and performed as part of church services or as morality plays, which taught moral lessons. The revival of interest in classical learning during the Renaissance brought about a resurgence of drama. Playwrights like William Shakespeare in England and Molière in France expanded the scope of theater, exploring complex characters and themes. From the 19th century onwards, theater continued to evolve with movements such as realism, naturalism, and symbolism. Modern drama often reflects contemporary social issues, psychological exploration, and experimental forms. Throughout its history, drama has served as a powerful medium for exploring human emotions, societal issues, and philosophical questions. It has adapted to cultural changes and technological advancements while maintaining its fundamental role as a form of artistic expression and storytelling.

6.4 DRAMA WITHIN THE CHURCH

In Europe, the drama had a distinctly religious origin. There is little doubt that the church was at the centre of the medieval life. It catered to both the social and spiritual needs of people. But what is truly fascinating is the way that it harnessed drama for its own purpose. It found in the dramatic form an ideal vehicle for conveying its sermons. In fact, the rituals observed in the church had all the ingredients of drama. Notable amongst them was the Mass. It had colorful robes and vestment; a procession from the churchyard to the inner sanctuary led by the bishop and his attendants and often accompanied by the comic figure of the boy bishop. The central nave of the church had the pulpit and space for the choir, while the church could hold a compact congregation. In many ways, the architecture of the building was like a natural theatre. It had choral singing and on special occasions as Christmas and Easter, the atmosphere was heightened by the use of candlelight, incense and music. By the tenth century words were added to the singing to give additional meaning. The first characters were drawn from the New Testament, and the object of the first plays was to make the church service more impressive or to emphasize the moral lessons by showing the reward of the good and the punishment of the evil doer.

During the later days of the Roman Empire, the Church found the stage possessed by frightful plays. The debased drama was driven from the stage and plays of every kind were forbidden. Later the Church itself provided a substitute for the forbidden plays in the famous Mysteries and Miracles

6.5 MYSTERY AND MIRACLE PLAYS

In France, the name miracle was given to any play representing the lives of saints, while mystery represented scenes from the life of Christ or stories from the Old Testament associated with the coming of Messiah. In England this distinction was almost unknown, the name Miracle was used indiscriminately for all plays having their origin in the Bible or in the lives of the saints; and the name Mystery, to distinguish a certain class of plays, was not used until long after the religious drama had passed away.

6.5.1 Mystery Plays

Mystery plays originated in the 10th century and were performed by guilds (associations of craftsmen and tradespeople) in Europe. They were typically enacted outdoors and were based on biblical stories, focusing primarily on episodes from the Old and New Testaments. It aimed to educate and edify the largely illiterate medieval population about religious teachings and biblical narratives. They were presented as part of religious festivals and were performed in vernacular languages (local languages) rather than Latin, making them accessible to ordinary people. Each play was often performed by a specific guild, such as the carpenters performing the story of Noah's Ark or the bakers depicting the Last Supper. They were episodic and didactic, emphasizing moral lessons and religious truths.

6.5.2 Miracle Plays

Miracle plays, also known as saint plays or saint's plays, emerged around the 12th century. Unlike mystery plays, which focused on biblical stories, miracle plays were centered on the lives and miracles of saints, martyrs, and other religious figures. It depicted miraculous events attributed to saints, emphasizing the power of faith and divine intervention. They were intended to inspire piety and devotion among the audience, reinforcing Christian virtues and beliefs. Like mystery plays, miracle plays were performed by guilds or religious organizations. They were often staged in town squares or outside churches during feast days or religious festivals.

Both mystery and miracle plays were integral parts of medieval religious life and served as important cultural and educational tools. They provided moral instruction, reinforced religious beliefs, and fostered a sense of community and collective identity among medieval townspeople. These forms of drama laid the groundwork for the development of later theatrical traditions in Europe.

6.6   MORALITY PLAYS

Morality Plays were never a part of any cycle but developed independently as moral tales in the fourteenth or early fifteenth century on the Continent and in England. They do not illustrate moments in the Bible, nor do they describe the life of Christ or the saints. In morality plays, abstractions such as goodness became characters in the drama. The use of allegory permitted the medieval dramatists to personify abstract values such as Sloth, Greed, Vanity, Strength, and Hope by making them characters and putting them on stage in action. The dramatists specified symbols, clothing, and gestures appropriate to these abstract figures, thus helping the audience recognize the ideas, the characters represented.

Morality plays developed in the late medieval period, particularly in the 14th and 15th centuries. They were allegorical dramas that personified moral attributes and vices, often depicting the struggle between good and evil. It typically featured allegorical characters such as Everyman (representing humanity), Good Deeds, Knowledge, and various vices like Greed or Lust. The plots focused on moral lessons and the consequences of human actions, emphasizing the importance of virtuous behavior and the avoidance of sin. These plays were didactic in nature, aiming to teach moral lessons to their audience. They were often performed by amateur actors or guilds and were popular throughout Europe during the late Middle Ages.

In short, morality plays were allegorical dramas with a moralistic purpose, focusing on ethical themes and the struggle between virtues and vices. Interludes, on the other hand, were secular and comedic plays that provided entertainment and social commentary, contributing to the diversity and evolution of theatrical forms during the medieval and Renaissance periods.

6.7   INTERLUDES

The Interludes signify the important transition from symbolism to realism. It dispensed with the allegorical figures of the morality play almost completely and affected a complete break with the religious type of drama, even though retaining some of its didactic character. It was purely secular and fairly realistic, though quite crude and somewhat grotesque.

Interludes emerged in the late medieval period and became popular during the Renaissance in the 16th century. Unlike morality plays, interludes were secular in nature and typically shorter in length. Interludes were comedic or farcical in tone, often satirizing social customs, political figures, or contemporary issues. They featured diverse plots and characters, focusing on entertainment rather than moral instruction. They were performed in courtly or aristocratic circles and were sometimes staged as

entertainment between the acts of longer, more serious plays. They contributed to the development of comedy as a distinct genre and paved the way for the rise of professional theater in Europe.

6.8 THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

The term "Elizabethan Drama" adequately covers only the plays written and performed publicly in England throughout the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558–1603).Elizabethan Drama refers back to the plays produced by the University Wits between the Reformation and the closure of the theatres in 1642. It includes the plays of Robert Green, George Peele, Christopher Marlowe, and many others followed the monumental work of William Shakespeare.

The constellation of University wits (Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly, George Peele, Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe, Thomas Lodge Thomas Kyd)made the Elizabethan drama more popular with Renaissance humanism and pride of patriotism. They were precursors of Shakespeare.

6.9 THE UNIVERSITY WITS

The University Wits is a phrase used to name a group of late 16th century English playwrights and pamphleteers . The term "University Wits" was not used in their lifetime, but was coined by George Saintsbury, a 19th-century journalist and author. The term "University Wits" refers to a group of English playwrights and scholars who were active during the late 16th century, particularly in the Elizabethan era. These individuals played a significant role in the development of English drama and literature. Here are some key points about the University Wits:

The University Wits were so-called because many of them were educated at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. They were intellectuals who brought their scholarly knowledge and literary skills to the burgeoning theatrical scene in London. They were instrumental in laying the foundations for Elizabethan drama, which flourished during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. They experimented with different dramatic forms and helped to establish the conventions and structures of English Renaissance drama. Perhaps the most famous of the University Wits, Marlowe was known for his powerful blank verse and his pioneering tragedies such as "Doctor Faustus" and "Tamburlaine the Great." The University Wits brought a scholarly and intellectual approach to drama, incorporating classical themes, complex characters, and rhetorical flourishes into their works. They helped elevate English drama from its earlier medieval roots to a more sophisticated and artistic form.

The influence of the University Wits extended beyond their own works. Their innovations and contributions paved the way for later playwrights, including William Shakespeare, who built upon the foundations they established in terms of language, structure, and thematic exploration. In short, the

University Wits were a group of educated scholars and playwrights who significantly contributed to the development of English drama during the Elizabethan era, leaving a lasting impact on literature and theatrical traditions in England.

6.9.1 John Lily (1554- 1606)

Lily was educated at Magdalene College, Oxford. He also studied at Cambridge. He was the first to create romantic atmosphere combined with humour and fancy for romantic comedy. He wrote eight comedies - A Most Excellent Comedy Of Alexander And Coampaspe, Diogenes, (1584), Sapho and Phao (1584), Gallanthea (1588), Midas (1589), Mother Bombie (1590) Love's Metamorphosis (1590) and The Woman In The Moon. He particularly wrote for private theatres. He established prose as a medium of expression for comedy. He also used suitable blank verse for comedy. He is credited for inventing the device of mistaken identity that is a girl dressed as a boy. He wrote comedies and his comedies were intended for the child actors in Royal service. On the service done by Lily to drama Thomas Wyatt and William Collins comment thus: "Lily's greatest service to the drama consists in his writing plays in prose. Lily's sparkling dialogues gave Shakespeare and excellent model to follow and the greatest dramatist is probably indebted to him for his first teaching in court style and for hints as to the light touch so proper for handling of classical legend and fair love."

6.9.2 George Peele (1557- 1996)

George Peele was educated at Christ's Hospital London. He was a writer with versatile genius. He has given to English stage a pastoral drama, romantic satire, romantic tragedy and chronicle history. His works consist of The Arrangement of Paris, The Battle Of Alcazar, The Famous Chronicle Of King Edward, The I, The Love Of King David And Fair Berthsaobe And The Old Wives' Tale. In The Old Wives' Tales Peele for the first time introduced the note of satire in comedy.

6.9.3 Robert Greene (1558-1592)

Robert Greene was educated at Saint John's College and Clara hall Cambridge and was incorporated at Oxford in 1588. His plays include: The Comical History Of Alphonsus, King Of Aragorn, The Honourable History Of Friar Bacon And Friar Bungay, and The Scottish History Of James IV. Green was the first master of the art of plot construction in British Drama. He has three distinct worlds mingled together - the world of Magic, the world of aristocratic life and the world of the country life.

6.9.4 Thomas Lodge (1558-1625)

Thomas Lodge was an Elizabethan writer who is often considered one of England's earliest satirists with works such as A Fig for Momus. Lodge was raised in an educated family – his father was Lord Mayor of London – and he went to Merchant Taylor's School before progressing to Oxford University. There he studied for his BA and graduated in 1577 before going onto complete an MA and becoming a part of the law courts at Lincolns Inn. Whilst at university he had been more interested in writing and his first literary work, Defence of Poetry, Music and Stage Plays was published during this time. Although the initial pamphlet was banned, it was circulated privately and was followed by a more conventional prose work, The Delectable History of Forbonius and Prisceria. In 1580 he wrote and published a collection of poems under the title of Glaucus and Scilla and is thought to have married his first wife in 1583. His most famous of his works is his drama The Wounds of Civil War. It is a dramatization of the ancient Roman conflict between Marius and Sulla, the play is generally considered Lodge's only extant solo drama.

6.9.5 Thomas Nashe (1558-1625)

Thomas Nashe is considered the greatest of the English Elizabethan pamphleteers. He was a playwright, poet, and satirist. He is best known for his novel *The Unfortunate Traveller* and his numerous defenses of the Church of England. He is known for his drama *The Isle of Dogs* which he co-authored with Ben Jonson in 1597. The work caused a major controversy for its "seditious" content. The play was suppressed and never published. Jonson was jailed; Nashe's house was raided and his papers seized but he had already escaped out of the country. He remained for some time in Great Yarmouth before returning to London.

6.9.6 Thomas kyd (1558-1594)

Kyd's only play The Spanish Tragedy (1585), a Senecan tragedy is a landmark in the history of English drama. Kyd introduced the revenge motif in tragedy. He also introduced a hesitating type of hero and the device of play within a play in his drama *The Spanish Tragedy*.

6.9.7 Christopher Marlowe (1563-1593)

Christopher Marlowe, also known as Kit Marlowe, was an English playwright, poet and translator of the Elizabethan era. Marlowe was the foremost Elizabethan tragedian of his day. He greatly influenced William Shakespeare, who was born in the same year as Marlowe and who rose to become the pre-eminent Elizabethan playwright after Marlowe's mysterious early death. Marlowe's plays are known for the use of blank verse and their overreaching protagonists. As a dramatist Marlowe surpassed all the

University Wits. According to Swinburne "Marlowe was the first great poet, the father of English tragedy and the creator of blank verse." his memorable plays include: Tamburlaine the Great (1587), Dr Faustus (1587), The Jew Of Malta (1592), Edward II (1593), Tragedy Of Dedo, The Queen Of Carthage (1594) and The Massacre Of Paris (1596). In short, the university wits contributed significantly to the development and popularity of English drama. The coming generation of dramatists learnt a lot from these scholarly Giants. Shakespeare also learnt much from them and got a complete recognition and worldwide popularity in English literature. Marlowe exalted and varied the subject- matter of tragedy. For the Senecan motive of revenge he substituted the more interesting theme of ambition for power as in Tamburlaine, ambition for infinite knowledge as in Doctor Faustus, and ambition for gold as in The Jew of Malta. Secondly, he put forward a new kind of the tragic hero. The medieval concept of tragedy was the fall of a great man. Marlowe revived the Aristotelian conception of the tragic hero in so far as he introduced a certain flaw or flaws in his character, mainly an over-weaning ambition. Marlowe's establishment of blank verse is an effective and pliant medium of tragic utterance. With Marlowe, indeed begins a new era in the history of English Drama.

6.10 LET'S US SUM UP

In this Unit we have

- Introduced you origin of British Drama .
- Interpreted a remarkable genre of Drama.
- Pick out the various characteristic elements present in drama.
- Discussed the origin and development of Drama and role of University Wits in it.

6.11 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the origins of drama in ancient civilizations. How did early forms of drama evolve into the theatrical traditions of ancient Greece?
2. Explain the significance of Greek tragedy and comedy in the development of Western drama. How did these genres reflect and shape Greek society and culture?
3. Trace the development of medieval drama, including mystery plays, miracle plays, and morality plays. What roles did these plays serve in medieval society?
4. Compare and contrast the characteristics of medieval drama with those of classical Greek drama. How did each contribute to the evolution of theatrical forms?
5. Who were the University Wits, and what role did they play in the development of English Renaissance drama?

6. Discuss the contributions of at least three prominent University Wits.

7. Examine the influence of Christopher Marlowe on English drama.

8. How did Marlowe's works depart from earlier theatrical conventions and influence his contemporaries?

9. Discuss the themes and styles of Thomas Kyd's "The Spanish Tragedy." How did this play contribute to the development of Elizabethan drama?

10. How did the University Wits contribute to the establishment of London as a center for dramatic production during the Elizabethan era? Analyze their impact on theatrical innovation and audience reception.

6.12 SUGGESTED READING

Mundra. S.C. *A Compendious History of English Literature.* Prakash Book Depot. Bareilly

Singh. Dr. Raghavendra. *Introduction to Movements, Ages, and Literary Forms.* Viswavidyalaya Prakasan, Varanasi. 2004

Tilak, Dr. Raghukul. *History of English Literature.* Rajhans Publication,

Trivedi, R. D. *A Compendious History of English Literature.* Vikash Publishing House. New Delhi. 1976

UNIT 7 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND HIS WORKS

Structure

7.0   Objectives

7.1   Introduction

7.2   The Elizabethan Age

7.3   About the author

    7.3.1   Life

    7.3.2   Works

7.4   The Sonnet

    7.4.1 The English or Shakespearean Sonnet

7.5   Shakespearean Comedy

    7.5.1   Early Comedies

    7.5.2   Comedies of Joy

    7.5.3   Dark Comedies

    7.5.4   Dramatic Romance

    7.5.5   Main Features of Shakespearean Comedy

7.6   Shakespearean Tragedy

    7.6.1   Chief Characteristics

    7.6.2   Structure

    7.6.3   Moral Values and Poetic justice

7.7   Shakespeare's Historical Plays

7.8   Shakespearean Stage

7.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit aims to introduce learners to the life and works of William Shakespeare, the greatest and most renowned dramatist of the Elizabethan Age. Learners will also be given an in-depth understanding of the Elizabethan Age and the factors that contributed to Shakespeare's ability to write such powerful and excellent comedies and tragedies. Shakespeare's works, particularly his tragedies, continue to captivate readers today by helping them understand the complex nature of human existence.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, learners will delve into the life and works of William Shakespeare (1564–1616), who is widely recognized as the greatest dramatist in the world and the master of English Literature. Shakespeare was a renowned English playwright, poet, actor, inventor of words, and master of drama. He authored around 36 plays and 154 sonnets and introduced dozens of new words to the English language which are still used today. His plays have been translated into more than 90 languages and performed in many countries worldwide. In this unit, students will study Shakespeare's dramatic career, the period in which he wrote, as well as some of his most famous plays and characters. By carefully going through this unit, learners will gain insights into the impressions of Shakespeare's early and later years on his work.

7.2 THE ELIZABETHAN AGE

The Elizabethan Age, a period in the Tudor history of England, occurred during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603). It is often considered the "Golden Age" in English history, characterised by classical ideals, international expansion and naval victory over Spain. The Elizabethan Age is one of the richest periods in the history of England. The Age witnessed the rise and growth of the feelings of patriotism and nationalism among the people of England and brought about unprecedented progress in almost all the branches of its variegated life. In the words of Milton, we suddenly see England, as "a noble and puissant nation, rousing herself, like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible

locks." It was the age of an outburst of patriotism in England. People from all walks of life felt a great desire to make England great. Among them, there were statesmen like Burleigh and Walsingham, sailors like Hawkins and Drake, courtiers and soldiers like Spenser and Sidney. There were also merchants whose sons later founded the East India Company.

The Elizabethan era is widely known for its poetry and drama. *Tottel's Miscellany* was the first collection of English poems from this period, which consisted of songs and sonnets. It included sonnets written by Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey. Although it was published in 1557, it only gained popularity after Elizabeth became Queen. The publication was reissued in 1558 and 1559 and continued to be reprinted afterwards. It greatly influenced aspiring poets, leading to many imitations being created.

The outburst of the English drama is the chief glory of the Elizabethan age. Queen Elizabeth, her courtiers, and the People of London, all are said to have been very fond of drama. This period witnessed the long period of incubation of the drama which made a swift and wonderful leap into maturity. The earliest English plays were *King John* (1547) and *Garboduc* (1562). *Garboduc* afterwards called *Ferrex and Porrex*, written by Sackville and Norton, is most probably the first English tragedy. Other plays of a similar character were *Appius and Virginia* (1563), of anonymous authorship; *Jocasta* (1566); the *Historie of Horestes* (1567), also anonymous; Preston's *Cambyses, King of Percia* (1570); and Hughes's *Misfortune of Arthur* (1588). Along with the alien classical tragedy arose a healthier native breed of historical plays. These plays, the predecessors of the historical plays of Shakespeare, were dramatised forms of the early chronicles and combined both tragic and comic elements. This union of tragedy and comedy was alien to classical drama and was the chief glory of the Elizabethan stage. Early historical plays were *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* (before 1588), a mixture of crude verse and prose; *The Troublesome Raigne of King John* (before 1591); and *The Chronicle History of King Leir* (1594). *Ralph Royster Doyster* (1551), by Nicholas Udall, is the earliest extant comedy. Another comedy was *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (1575), the authorship of which is in dispute. Then came seven young dramatists known as "University Wits." They were: John Lyly, George Peele, Robert Greene, Thomas Nash, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe. These young men nearly all of whom were associated with Oxford and Cambridge, did much to found the Elizabethan school of drama. Yet the English drama had still many difficulties to overcome.

During the Elizabethan age, there was a revival of classical learning. The study of classical authors became a passion for the people of this age. The re-discovery and re-interpretation of antiquity gave birth to a new culture, that of humanism. The humanists led by Erasmus began to take an interest in life and mankind. In England also the humanistic culture had its influence. Under the new creed, life no longer

seemed a mere penance to be endured by the good Christian in preparation for heaven. People began to take an interest in this life and strove hard to make it better and happier. The humanistic principles created the new ideal man who reached out to perfection on all sides. This ideal man exercised his intellect upon philosophy, literature and science; he trained his body for war and the chase; he was the perfect courtier and the perfect lover.

In the later Elizabethan period (in the years between 1589 and 1603) England saw the golden age of English drama and English poetry. The most famous playwright of this period was William Shakespeare. The most famous poets were Spenser, Shakespeare, Daniel, Drayton, Donne, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan and Andrew Marvell. According to one literary critic, England became a nest of sweet singing birds during this period. There appeared almost every year different collections of verse and a large number of budding poets contributed their verses to them. For example, *The Phoenix Nest* appeared in 1593; *The Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599; *England's Helican, England's Parnassus*, and *Belvedere* appeared in 1600. The first three books of *The Faerie Queene* were brought forward by Spenser in 1589. His *Amoretti* sonnets appeared in 1595 and the second three books of *The Faerie Queene* were also published in 1595. Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* was published in 1598. Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* appeared in 1593 and *The Rape of Lucrece* in 1594.

In the field of drama, about one hundred plays of the first water were produced and enacted in the years between 1589 and 1612. Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* appeared in 1587; his *Doctor Faustus* in 1592, and *The Jew of Malta in* 1589. Shakespeare's great comedies – *The Merchant of Venice, Much Ado about Nothing, As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* appeared between 1596 and 1600. His great tragedies – *Hamlet, Othello, King Lear* and *Macbeth* appeared between 1600 and 1605.

In the age of Elizabeth, all doubts seemed to vanish from English history. After the reign of Edward and Mary, with defeat and humiliation abroad and persecutions and rebellion at home, the accession of a popular sovereign was like the sunrise after a long night. Queen Elizabeth with all her vanity and inconsistency, steadily loved England and England's greatness; and she inspired all her people with unbounded Patriotism which exalts in Shakespeare, and with the personal devotion which finds a voice in *The Faerie Queene*. Under her administration, the English national life progressed by gigantic leaps rather than by a slow historical process.

The most striking feature of the age was religious tolerance, which was due largely to the queen's influence. The frightful excesses of the religious war known as the Thirty Years Wars on the continent found no parallel in England. Upon her accession Elizabeth found the whole kingdom divided against

itself; the North was largely Catholic, while the southern countries were strongly Protestant. Scotland had followed the Reformation in its intense way, while Ireland remained true to its old religious traditions, and both countries were openly rebellious. The court was made up of parties who witnessed the revival intrigues of those who sought to gain royal favour. Elizabeth favoured both religious parties.

The Elizabethan age was an age of comparative social contentment in contrast with the days of Langland. The rapid increase in manufacturing towns gave employment to thousands who had before been idle and discontented. The sense of social security and contentment gave a spurt to literary activity.

As William J. Long puts it, "It is an age of dreams, of adventure, of unbounded enthusiasm springing from the new lands of fabulous riches revealed by English explorers. Drake sails around the world, shaping the mighty course which English colonizers shall follow through the centuries; and presently the young philosopher Bacon is saying confidently, "I have taken all knowledge for my province." The discoveries in the field of astronomy by Copernicus against the old theories by Ptolemy, and the discovery of America by Columbus and Cabot brought about a widening of the horizon. New knowledge began to pour in from the East and new worlds were opening in the West. The great voyagers, whose exploits were chronicled in the immortal pages of Hakluyt's *Collection of Voyages*, brought home both material and intellectual treasures from beyond the "still vexed Bermoothes' as Shakespeare called them. Some explorations had an important effect on the production of literature.

Printing, which Caxton had introduced in the age of Chaucer, had now its full impact. The new learning was popularised by the printing press. Previously education had been in the hands of the Church. But, with the Renaissance, secular education began to find a place. A reading public grew up during the Elizabethan age and the new literature was welcomed by the people.

People of this age did not care much for very high principles of morality and justice, and to outwit, to surprise, to bewilder, to "frame", and "to look one way and row another" were maxims of the state. Delays of justice itself were arranged by bargain, and mild sentences, if not acquittals bought and sold. The doctrine that a great end justified doubtful means, was accepted by people without any question. The acceptance of this doctrine easily led to the application that any end of advancement could be justified by means undoubtedly bad.

7.3 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William Shakespeare was an English poet, dramatist, and actor who is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called

England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon" (or simply "the Bard"). His extant works, including collaborations, consist of some 39 plays, 154 sonnets, three long narrative poems, and a few other verses, some of uncertain authorship. He is considered by many writers, the greatest dramatist of all time, occupying a unique position in world literature. The prophecy of his great contemporary, the poet and dramatist Ben Jonson, that Shakespeare "was not of an age, but for all time," has been fulfilled. Shakespeare changed the English language, inventing dozens of new words which we still use today. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. Shakespeare remains arguably the most influential writer in the English language, and his works continue to be studied and reinterpreted.

7.3.1 Life

William Shakespeare was baptized in the Parish Church at Stratford-on-Avon on April 26, 1564. In those days as a custom the children were baptized on the third day after birth, so the twenty-third of April is generally accepted as his birthday. His father John Shakespeare was a farmer's son and his mother Mary Arden was the daughter of a prosperous farmer, descended from an old family of mixed Anglo-Saxon and Norman blood. It is generally accepted that the parents of Shakespeare were illiterate. Nicholas Rowe claims to have written the first formal biography of Shakespeare, which was prefixed to his edition of the plays 1709. The biography was based on popular legends and tradition.

At the age of seven, he was admitted to the Grammar School, known as The King's New School at Stratford where he picked up the "small Latin and less Greek" to which his learned friend Ben Jonson refers. His real teachers, meanwhile, were the men and women and the natural influences which surrounded him. Nature was his real teacher. He learnt what Nature made him taught. He kept his heart as well as his eyes wide open to the beauty of the world. He notes and remembers every significant thing in the changing panorama of earth and sky. That's why, no other writer has ever surpassed him in the perfect natural setting of his characters. At the age of fourteen, he left school because his father lost his property and fell into debt. For the next few years what he was doing is a matter of conjecture. In 1582, at the age of eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway who was eight years senior to him. He had three children. Susana, the eldest child was born on 26 May 1583, Hamnet and Judith, the twin son and daughter, were born on 2 February 1585. Hamnet, the darling of his father, died quite young.

In 1587 he left his native town to settle in London where he joined Burbage's company of players. The reason why he left Stratford is uncertain. According to a record he was caught stealing deer from Sir Thomas Lucy's park and fled from the place to escape the consequences. Of Shakespeare's life in London

from 1587 to 1611, nothing definite is known. It was the period of his greatest literary activity. He entered into the stirring life of London with the same perfect sympathy and understanding which he had shown among the simple folk of his native Warwickshire. The first authentic reference to him came in 1592 when Robert Green attacked Shakespeare in a pamphlet called *"A Groat's Worth of Wit Bought with a Million of Repentance"* saying that *"...there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tiger's heart wrapped in a Player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Johannes factotum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country." This shows plainly that Shakespeare had in five years an important position among the playwrights.* He came to be known among his fellows as "the gentle Shakespeare". Ben Jonson said of him, "I loved the man and do honour to his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any. He was indeed honest and of an open and free nature."

This was a period when drama was gaining popularity in London due to the influence of the University Wits. Shakespeare discovered his interest in the stage. He started his stage career as an actor and then he turned his attention towards playwriting. But of course, running his attention towards writing did not stop him from continuing his acting. During Shakespeare's younger years, travelling groups of professional actors visited Stratford. It is possible that these performers were responsible for making Shakespeare interested in the stage. Some critics also suggest that Shakespeare's entry into the world of theatre in London City could have been made possible by the contact he had built for himself through these travelling groups. In the year 1593, when the plague broke in London city most of the theatres were shut down. During this period Shakespeare turned his attention towards writing poetry. In the very same year, Shakespeare published *Venus and Adonis,* which was an erotic poem. The poem was dedicated to Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton. It is believed that Henry was a young courtier and Queen Elizabeth held him in high affection. This poem became immensely popular in London, and its dedication to the Earl of Southampton brought a substantial monetary gift, which may have laid the foundation for Shakespeare's business success. In the year 1594 William Shakespeare became a founding member as well as shareholder of Lord Chamberlain's Men. He also contributed as an actor and playwright in the company. Shakespeare performed the roles of Richard III, Othello, King Lear and Hamlet. A few years later the company was renamed to The King's Men. They performed mostly in the court and then in other venues. It is understood that Shakespeare remained in London for close to 20 years after this. He worked hard and produced a few plays every year which helped them grow both in popularity as well as in wealth. He soon became a shareholder in the major theatre company of his time - the Globe and the Blackfriars. Apart from being the shareholder he also possessed property in Stanford as well as London. But the years as they passed by not only brought him success and fortune but also misfortune. In the year

1596, his only son departed for the heavenly abode. He bought New Place, the finest and second largest house in Stratford in 1597 from William Underhill. In the year 1601, his father too passed away. In the year 1607, his younger brother Edmund who was also an actor died unexpectedly. And as if this was not difficult enough, Shakespeare's mother passed away in the very next year, in 1608. Sometimes between the years 1610 to 1612, William Shakespeare moved to Stratford. By that time his elder daughter had married Dr. John Hall (the famous physician). And by 1616 Judith married Thomas Quincy. Thomas Quincy's father was a great friend of Shakespeare. Though still in the prime of life, Shakespeare gave up his dramatic work to live the comfortable life of a country gentleman. Some of his later plays show a decline in the quality of his previous work. His last play was *The Tempest*, based upon an actual shipwreck. Shakespeare was unaware of his success and had no idea that his plays were the greatest that the world had ever produced. He never attempted to collect and publish them. After a few years of calm life, this magnificent soul departed to its heavenly abode on the probable anniversary of its birth, April 23, 1616. Shakespeare was buried at Holy Trinity Church at Stratford. He was given a tomb in the chancel of the Parish Church, not because of his preeminence in literature, but because of his interest in the affairs of a country village. And in the sad irony of fate, the broad stone that covered his tomb – now an object of veneration to the thousands that yearly visit the little church – was inscribed as follows:

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbeare

To dig the dust enclosed heare;

Blest be the man that spares these stones,

And curst be he that moves my bones.

This wretched doggerel, over the world's greatest poet, was intended, no doubt, as a warning to some stupid sexton, lest he should empty the grave and give the honoured place to some amiable gentleman who had given more tithes to the Parish.

Seven years after Shakespeare's death, in the year 1623, two actors from the King's company, John Heming and Henry Condell, published the plays of Shakespeare. This was the first folio. It contains 36 plays of the 37 plays generally attributed to Shakespeare, *Pericles* being omitted and it was sold for 1 pound. Anne Hathaway, the widow of Shakespeare, died in the year 1623. She was buried beside him in Holy Trinity Church. It is believed that the family line of William Shakespeare came to an end after the death of his granddaughter in the year 1670.

7.3.2 Works of William Shakespeare

Shakespeare wrote most probably 37 plays in the course of the twenty-five years of his dramatic career. He wrote his dramas as well as his non-dramatic poems during the years 1588 to 1612. His greatest achievement lies, of course, in the field of drama, but his narrative poems and his sonnets also possess high merits and excellence. The plays are comedies, tragedies and histories. The comedies may be described as early and immature comedies, happy and romantic comedies, dark comedies, and dramatic romances. Tragedies may be described as early tragedies and mature tragedies. Histories may be described as Chronicle plays relating to England, and the Roman plays. Chronologically, however, the plays may be grouped differently. Edward Dowden in his *'Shakespeare Primer'* has divided Shakespeare's dramatic career into four periods, namely 'In the workshop', 'In the world' 'Out of the depths', and 'On the heights'. Each of these periods marks the development of Shakespeare's mind and art. 'In the workshop' refers to Shakespeare's early and immature plays, when he was serving his period of apprenticeship. 'In the World' refers to mature comedies, which were drawn upon his experience in the school of life. 'Out of the depths' refers to the tragedies, which are the outcome of his acquaintance with the deeper and fundamental problems; and 'On the Heights' describes the last plays, all written in a state of serenity after a distressing period of storm and stress.

His poetic and dramatic career has been divided into four periods by William Joseph Long, corresponding to the growth and experience of his life and mind. These divisions are as follows:

A Period of Early Experimentation – It is marked by youthfulness and exuberance of imagination and by the frequent use of, rhymed couplets with blank verse. The period dates from his arrival in London to 1595. Typical works of this period are his early poems, *Love's Labour's Lost, Two Gentlemen of Verona,* and *Richard III.*

A Period of Rapid Growth and Development from 1595 to 1600 – Plays like- *The Merchant of Venice, Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It and Henry IV,* all written in this period, show more careful artistic work and a marked increase in the knowledge of human nature.

A Period of Gloom and Depression, from 1600 to 1607 – It marks the full maturity of his powers. Personal experiences coupled with the misfortunes of his friends, Essex and Southampton are probably the cause of this evident sadness. The *Sonnets* with their note of personal disappointment, *Twelfth Night,* which is his "farewell to mirth", and his great tragedies, *Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, Othello, and Julius Caesar,* belong to this period.

A Period of Restored Serenity, of Calm after Storm – marks the last years of the poet's literary work. *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* are the best of his last plays, but they show a decided decline from his previous work.

7.4 THE SONNET

The sonnet is a popular classical form that has compelled poets for centuries. Traditionally, the sonnet is a fourteen-line poem written in iambic pentameter, employing one of several rhyme schemes, and adhering to a tightly structured thematic organization. The word sonnet is derived from the Italian sonetto, which means "a little sound or song." Two sonnet forms provide the models from which all other sonnets are formed: the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean.

The Petrarchan sonnet, also known as the Italian sonnet, is a sonnet named after the Italian poet Francesco Petrarca. The original Italian sonnet form consists of a total of fourteen hendecasyllabic lines (in English sonnets, iambic pentameter is used) in two parts, the first part being an octave and the second being a sestet. The rhyme scheme for the octave is typically ABBAABBA. The sestet is more flexible. Petrarch typically used CDECDE or CDCDCD for the sestet.

Shakespeare has written a long sonnet-sequence consisting of 154 pieces. These sonnets were written during the years 1592 and 1597 or 1598; but they were not published until 1609, only seven years before Shakespeare's death. They were not published by Shakespeare himself. The publisher was a man named Thomas Thorpe, a literary minded man.

7.4.1 The English or Shakespearean Sonnet

The Shakespearean, or English sonnet, follows a different set of rules. Here, three quatrains and a couplet follow this rhyme scheme: abab, cdcd, efef, gg. The couplet plays a pivotal role, usually arriving in the form of a conclusion, amplification, or even refutation of the previous three stanzas, often creating an epiphanic quality to the end. In [Sonnet 130](#) of [William Shakespeare](#)'s epic sonnet cycle, the first twelve lines compare the speaker's mistress unfavorably with nature's beauties, but the concluding couplet swerves in a surprising direction.

Shakespeare's Sonnets include a dedication to "Mr. W.H.":

> TO.THE.ONLIE.BEGETTER.OF.THESE.INSUING.SONNETS.
>
> Mr.W.H.ALL.HAPPINESSE.
>
> AND.THAT.ETERNITIE.
>
> PROMISED.

BY.
OUR.EVER-LIVING.POET.
WISHETH.
THE.WELL-WISHING.
ADVENTURER.IN.
SETTING.
FORTH.

T.T.

The upper case letters and the stops that follow each word of the dedication were probably intended to resemble an ancient Roman lapidary inscription or monumental brass, perhaps accentuating the declaration in Sonnet 55 that the work would confer immortality to the subjects of the work.

The initials "T.T." are taken to refer to the publisher, Thomas Thorpe. Thorpe usually signed prefatory matter only if the author was out of the country or dead, which suggests that Shakespeare was not in London during the last stage of printing. However, Thorpe's entire corpus of such consists of only four dedications and three prefaces. It has been suggested that Thorpe signing the dedication, rather than the author, might indicate that Thorpe published the work without obtaining Shakespeare's permission. Though Thorpe's taking on the dedication may be explained by the great demands of business and travel that Shakespeare was facing at this time, which may have caused him to deal with the printing production in haste before rushing out of town. After all, May 1609 was an extraordinary time. That month saw a serious outbreak of the plague, which shut down the theatres, and also caused many to flee London. Shakespeare's theatre company was on tour from Ipswich to Oxford. In addition, Shakespeare had been away from Stratford and in the same month, May, was being called on to tend to family and business there, and deal with the litigation of a lawsuit in Warwickshire that involved a substantial amount of money.

The identity of Mr. W.H., "the only begetter of Shakespeare's Sonnets", is not known for certain. His identity has been the subject of a great amount of speculation: That he was the author's patron, that he was both patron and the "faire youth" who is addressed in the sonnets, that the "faire youth" is based on Mr. W.H. in some sonnets but not others, and a number of other ideas.

William Herbert, the 3rd Earl of Pembroke, is seen as perhaps the most likely identity of Mr. W.H. and the "young man". He was the dedicatee of the First Folio. Thorpe would have been unlikely to have addressed a lord as "Mr.", but there may be an explanation, perhaps that form of address came from the author, who wanted to refer to Herbert at an earlier time—when Herbert was a "younger man". There is a

later dedication to Herbert in another quarto of verse, Ben Jonson's Epigrammes (1616), in which the text of Jonson's dedication begins, "MY LORD, While you cannot change your merit, I dare not change your title …" Jonson's emphasis on Pembroke's title, and his comment, seem to be chiding someone else who had the audacity to use the wrong title, as perhaps is the case in Shakespeare's dedication.

Henry Wriothesley (the 3rd Earl of Southampton), with initials reversed, has received a great deal of consideration as a likely possibility. He was the dedicatee of Shakespeare's poems Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece. Southampton was also known for his good looks.

The sonnets of Shakespeare are divided into two groups: Sonnets 1 to 126 and sonnets 127 to 152. The first group is addressed to W.H. whom we have discussed above and the second group is addressed to a lady who has come be known as the dark lady and whose identity is still a matter of conjecture. Now most of the critics believe that this lady or woman was Marry Fitton or Avisa. The last two sonnets, 153 and 154 stand in a class by themselves. These two sonnets are the celebration of love because they describe the invincible power of Cupid, the God of love.

Shakespearean sonnets are known for their distinct characteristics that set them apart from other forms of poetry. One key characteristic is the rhyme scheme, which follows a strict pattern of ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. This creates a sense of musicality and rhythm throughout the poem. Another defining feature is the iambic pentameter, which consists of five pairs of unstressed and stressed syllables in each line. This rhythmic pattern adds to the overall flow and elegance of Shakespearean sonnets. In terms of content, these sonnets often explore themes such as love, beauty, time, and mortality. They delve into deep emotions and complex thoughts with rich imagery and metaphors.

The Volta or turn is another important aspect of Shakespearean sonnets. It typically occurs around the ninth line and marks a shift in tone or perspective within the poem. Furthermore, Shakespearean sonnets often employ rhetorical devices such as alliteration, metaphor, simile, personification, and hyperbole to enhance their impact on readers.

Several themes such as the passage of time, love, infidelity, jealousy, beauty, and mortality are found in Shakespeare's sonnets. Shakespeare's sonnets are written around the theme of death and lasting fame, the poet's own art, friendship, mutability and love. It appears from the reading of the sonnets that Shakespeare was snared by a married woman, the reverse of beautiful according to the conventional Elizabethan standard-dark-haired, dark-eyes and pale cheeked. She was a musician, skilled in touching the virginal-one of three forms of the harpsichord. She was temperamental, she could attract and repel, irritate and soothe the poet. His best sonnets exhibit different aspects of love on the one hand and the

lover's strong emotions for his beloved on the other. In *True Love*, he requests his beloved not to change her attitude for:

"Love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds."

The sonnets written by Shakespeare are largely autobiographical and personal in nature; and each of them expresses a feeling or emotion which is always very strong and often very intense in choice language and possess what is known as the felicity of words and phrase.

These characteristics make Shakespearean sonnets unique works of art that continue to captivate audiences' centuries after they were written. Their timeless themes and poetic techniques ensure their enduring popularity among literature enthusiasts. Time conquers everything, but these sonnets would transcend time and perpetuate the youth and beauty of Shakespeare's friend. The play of words, the large number of literary devices, and the magnificent descriptions that Shakespeare uses always leave readers breathless, and that is what makes these sonnets immortal.

7.5 SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDY

Shakespeare's comedies are generally identifiable as plays full of fun, irony and dazzling wordplay. They also abound in disguises and mistaken identities, with very convoluted plots that are difficult to follow with very contrived endings. The general perception of a comic play is that it ends happily for the protagonists and also have elements that may produce laughter. This perception is very close to Shakespearean Comedy.

When Shakespeare appeared on the scene, there were three types of comedy in England. The first was the Morality, which might excite people's laughter. But its primary object was didactic. There was hardly any humour or wit in it. Broad extempore buffoonery of the Morality was the source of mirth and laughter. The clown with his antics captured the popular imagination. The second type was the New Comedy, which like a tragedy, sought to represent misfortune - "of a kind which arouses the passion, not of pity and terror, but of laughter, because we perceive that the situation is not serious or irremediable, and are in the meantime pleased both with the sense of our own impunity, as well as with the confusions, mistakes, and intrigues in which other persons are involved." The third type may be called the Romantic Comedy, which deals with things that are unreal. Lyly, and not Greene, initiated the movement for Romantic Comedy. Lyly's plots are drawn mostly from the classical mythology, and his heroes and heroines are persons, with whom we can never hope to establish any familiarity. It was the avowed objective of the

dramatist to take his audience to the dreamland of romance and unreality. The prologues to his plays may be cited to illustrate our point. In the prologue to Endymion, Lyly says: "We present neither comedy nor tragedy, nor story, nor anything, but whosoever heareth may say this, why, here is a tale of the *Man in the Moon*." The audience are, thus, shifted from the mundane existence and lifted to a world, which can be negotiated only with own imagination. In the Prologue to *The Woman in the Moon*, Lyly says:

If many faults escape in her discourse

Remember all is but a poet's dream.

Shakespeare with his highly receptive mind largely drew upon all the three types of comedy already in vogue in England. He did not begin as a romantic, nor did he kick off the dust of the familiar surroundings. It is only in the later stage that he escorted us to the romantic world of make-believe – to places like Illyria, the Forest of Arden and Bohemia, which even the best geographer does not hope to locate.

Shakespeare's comic plays can be classified into four different group.

7.5.1 Early Comedies

Shakespeare early comic plays were farcical and immature. It was packed with wits, puns and conceits. Humour appeared as forced and cheap. The style of Shakespeare early comedies matches the Lyly's style. Plot and character composition were weak. Shakespeare's comic plays that fall in this category are:

Love's Labour's Lost,

The Comedy of Errors,

The two gentlemen of Verona,

Midsummer Night's Dream.

7.5.2 Comedies of Joy

The plays that fall in this group were full of love and music, fun and merry-making are the main ingredients of these comedies. They have wonderful heroines and characters were skillfully composed. A fine blend of romantic and realistic can be seen in these plays. This group includes plays like:

The Merchant of Venice,

As You Like It,

Much Ado about Nothing,

Twelfth Night

7.5.3 Dark Comedies

Dark comedies written by Shakespeare were sombre, dark and tragic in essence. These plays have low moral values and the theme is more of cynicism than comedy. These plays are comedies, only in name and form, but not in essence. This group includes plays like:

All's Well that Ends Well,

Measure for Measure,

Troilus and Cressida

7.5.4 Dramatic Romances

This style of comedy was very different from Shakespeare's early comedies. Towards the end of his career, Shakespeare switched back to comic plays from tragedies. This group includes plays like:

Cymbeline

The Winter's Tale,

The Tempest

7.5.5 Main Features of Shakespearean Comedy

Shakespearean comedy is a story of love and marriage. Not only the hero and heroine but almost all characters fall in love. Every Shakespearean comedy, predominantly deals with the theme of love. The very beginning lines of *Twelfth Night* show us how Duke Orsino is expressing his love for Olivia.

> *If music be the food of love, play on;*
>
> *Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,*
>
> *The appetite may sicken, and so die.* **(Twelfth Night)**

Marriage plays an important role in all Shakespearean comedies. It becomes an obsession and prime concern of the main characters to get engaged and married to the lady or gentleman of their choice. For example, in *Twelfth Night,* we observe that Viola enters into wedlock with Orsino and Olivia gets married

to Sebastian, the brother of Viola. Thus, it resolves the issue of mistaken identity. Olivia comes to know that Cesario is actually a female, named Viola, while Orsino also comes to know about the real identity of Viola. Look at the following lines, wherein Duke Orsino calls Cesario, though, he has come to know about the real identity of Viola:

"Cesario", come;

For so you shall be, while you are a man;

But when in other habits you are seen,

Orsino's mistress and his fancy's queen.

(*Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare)

Characters impersonating someone or are mistaken for someone else is another important feature of Shakespearean comedy. For example, Sebastian is mistaken for Cesario by Olivia, while Viola is mistakenly thought to be a male. Though, she is a girl, yet she is considered to be a male as she disguises herself as a servant to Duke Orsino. Similarly, in *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia disguises herself as Balthazar to act as a lawyer to defend Antonio against Shylock, who is determined to cut a pound of flesh off his body for failing to pay him (Shylock) his debt. Thus, mistaken identity is the part and parcel of Shakespearean comedy.

Shakespeare is a great lover of puns and he uses them frequently in all of his comedies to create fun, laughter, and confusion in the minds of his readers. He leaves the readers to derive the meaning for themselves from the puns employed by him. Look at the following lines taken From *Twelfth Night*, wherein Shakespeare's plays with the word *points:*

> *Clown: Not so, neither; but I am resolved on two points.*

> *MARIA: That if one break, the other will hold; or, if both break, your gaskins fall.*

> (*TwelfthNight* by Shakespeare)

Without humour, no play can be considered a comedy. Rather, it would be termed a tragedy. That's why; like other comedies, humour is an integral part of Shakespearean comedy. Shakespeare is the master of producing robust laughter and fun through various means in his comedies. For example in the following lines from **Twelfth Night**, humour is reflected thus:

"No, sir, I live by the church.

"Art thou a churchman?"

"No such matter, sir; I do live by the church; for I do live at my house and my house doth stand by the church."

(*Twelfth Night* by Shakespeare)

Buffoonery is another feature of Shakespearean comedy. Every single comedy of Shakespeare has got a fool or a clown, who provides humour in the play. A fool is a special kind of character in a typical Shakespearean comedy, who has got the gift of gab. They are witty and they know how to reply to a person during an argument. One can observe in *The Merchant of Venice* that the clown is used to exchange messages between the lovers, i.e., Lorenzo and Jessica. Thus, we have Feste in *Twelfth Night*, Launcelot in *The Merchant of Venice*, and Touchstone in *As You Like It*.

Shakespearean comedies are set in idyllic surroundings. The locations are like paradise, which doesn't exist in reality and is created by the imagination of the writer.

Another important feature of Shakespearean comedy is music and dance. The climax part of his comedies is always full of music, dance and merrymaking.

Fate and Fantasy place an important role in Shakespeare's comic plays. He makes human appear as a plaything, in the hand of some supernatural power. Supernatural elements like fairies and monsters are also part of his play.

All Shakespearean comedy has a happy ending and ends with the marriage of one or several characters. The confusion gets resolved and everything becomes clear. In *Twelfth Night*, one can observe that Duke Orsino marries Viola and Olivia marries Sebastian. Similarly, The Merchant of Venice also ends on a happy note. Antonio is saved from giving one pound of flesh of his body to Shylock. Thus, every Shakespearean comedy ends happily and the issues are resolved in the end. Some people argue that this is because Shakespeare was trying to send a message of hope during difficult times. Others believe that he was simply trying to entertain his audience.

7.6 SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

The term tragedy is derived from the Greek word "tragoidia", which is made up of two words, tragos ("goat") and aeidein ("to sing"). Thus it means "song of the goat". It was called the "song

of the goat" because in the past the theater performers used to wear goatskin costumes to portray mischievous "satyrs" for adding an element of eccentricity to their performance. The word could have referred either to the prize, a goat, that was awarded to the dramatists whose plays won the earliest competitions or to the dress (goat skins) of the performers, or to the goat that was sacrificed in the rituals from which tragedy developed. Today, the term tragedy has evolved to refer to any form of art that ends with an unhappy note.

Tragedy is a literary and dramatic representation of serious actions that culminates in a disastrous conclusion for the protagonist. Aristotle defines tragedy as an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude. The language used in tragedy is embellished with artistic ornaments, with several kinds of language used in separate parts of the play. The form of the tragedy is in action rather than narrative, and it evokes pity and fear, purging these emotions. Aristotle believed that the principal element in the structure of tragedy is the plot, not the character. Since the erring protagonist is always in partial opposition to the state, the importance of tragedy lies in the enlightening event, not the character. Aristotle considered the plot to be the soul of a tragedy, with character in second place. The goal of tragedy is not suffering but the knowledge that arises from it. The most powerful elements of emotional interest in tragedy are reversal of intention or situation (peripeteia) and recognition scenes (anagnorisis). Each is most effective when it is coincident with the other. For instance, in Oedipus, the messenger who brings Oedipus news of his real parentage, intending to allay his fears, brings about a sudden reversal of his fortune, from happiness to misery, by compelling him to recognize that his wife is also his mother.

Shakespearean tragedies are usually divided into four different segments: Early tragedies, Historical tragedies, Major tragedies and Roman tragedies. The early tragedies would comprise of Titus Andronicus and Romeo and Juliet. After the publication of Seneca's *Ten Tragedies* in the year 1581, it greatly influenced playwrights of the Elizabethan period. Critics argue that if there were no Seneca the Elizabethan tragedies would have never have shaped up. The theme of blood and revenge, supernaturalism and madness became so popular that almost every other dramatist tried incorporating these themes into their writings. Titus Andronicus one of the earliest tragedies written by Shakespeare looks almost like a replica of a work composed by Seneca. Titus was the Roman general who lost most of his children in the battle that he fought against the Goths. He decides to avenge everything that has gone wrong with him. Even though in the first glance Titus looks like someone inspired by Seneca because of the celebration of blood and death yet at the same time there is no denial that Titus is one of those earlier characters of Shakespeare who distinctly displays an element of intense tragedy that is reflected in the

later tragedies of Shakespeare. If we consider Romeo and Juliet, there is a very little strain of Seneca. In fact, one of the most distinguishable features of Romeo and Juliet is that they do not possess any tragic flaw. They are the victims of the faith they are not victims of their own doing. The famous author Chaucer in his Monk's tale suggest that a tragedy is a story where we talk about someone of great instrument and he has fallen into misery and wretchedness. Analysed from this perspective Richard definitely fits into the bill of a tragic king. He was somebody from an extremely influential position and later he was imprisoned and killed. He is one of those heroes from the major tragedies who are responsible for their own downfall. Richard is someone who is made to handle hostile circumstances. Yet at the same time there is no tragic conflict. If we consider Richard III, we realise that Shakespeare was definitely under the influence of his contemporaries and predecessors like Marlowe and Machiavelli. This is probably the only text which has been off and on compared with Macbeth. But of course, Macbeth stands in a more superior position because he is a poet and he is caught by his ambition which is regulated by morality. Even when he is ready to occupy the throne after causing such unrest and feeling glad we cannot but admire him through the conflicting imagination that he was struggling with. Richard, on the other hand, is not a tragic hero like that of Macbeth. But at the same time, in the battle of Bosworth, his sufferings come out clearly through the tricks of conference that we come across. We see how the ghosts of the victims come to curse him. Interestingly, Richard is an antagonist who shows the distinct side of humanity. Shakespearean tragedies albeit are not regulated by rules. In fact, Shakespearean Tragedy has never won any inclination towards adherence of rules. His tragedies identify the evolution of a new form of tragedy. The tragedies produced by the Greeks were highly rhetorical as well as political. While for Shakespeare, tragedy is mostly a mental conflict. It is more layered more complicated and along with the divine intervention it also talks about the human aspect. Greek tragedy also had a strong streak of religious undertone to it. But Shakespearean tragedies are more flesh and blood and secular. In Romeo and Juliet as well as in Antony and Cleopatra we find both the male and female protagonist are of equal significance. The protagonists in Antony and Cleopatra are equally more active and on the other hand the hero and heroine of Romeo and Juliet are equally powerless. Even if we consider Macbeth we realise that the heroine who has surfaced as a powerful figure who has managed to suppress her womanhood is finally pushed into insanity and eventually death. It more often than not highlights the plight of the main character and the woman protagonist is invariably side-lined.

In Shakespeare's tragedies, the main protagonist generally has a flaw that leads to his downfall. There are both internal and external struggles and often a bit of the supernatural thrown in for good measure (and tension). Often there are passages or characters that have the job of lightening the mood (comic relief), but the overall tone of the piece is quite serious.

All of Shakespeare's tragedies contain at least one or more of these elements:

A tragic hero

A dichotomy of good and evil

A tragic waste

Hamartia (the hero's tragic flaw)

Issues of fate or fortune

Greed

Foul revenge

Supernatural elements

Internal and external pressures

The paradox of life

7.6.1 Chief Characteristics of Shakespearean Tragedy

Chief characteristics of Shakespearean tragedies are key to understand the complex structure of his drama and to analyse them with a view to common goals that his chief characters tried to achieve. These characteristics can be understood under the following points:

Shakespearean tragedies are mostly one man show. However, he used a huge number of characters in his tragedies compared to Greek tragedies excluding chorus but the focus always remained on hero. Other characters also experience rise and fall according to the plot but hero remains a pivotal figure during the whole play. There is an exception in his love tragedies like *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Romeo and Juliet*, where heroine also gains focus of the audience.

In Shakespearean tragedies, hero is from outstanding social status. His heroes are same like Greek and Roman heroes. His all heroes are from kings (Julius, Caesar, Lear), princes (Hamlet), nobles (Macbeth, Brutus), or military commanders (Othello). Tragedies, written before Shakespeare, were also conforming to the same Greek tradition. Some critic accused him for snobbery, they said that a common man may face a tragedy in his life and his suffering is same like a king or a noble. But, Shakespeare has his own point of view that a common man wins sympathies from only his close and limited class but tragedy of a king or a nobleman win sympathies of a large span which makes it more appealing.

Shakespearean tragedies depict suffering of a hero causing his tragic death. In Shakespearean sense, a tragedy is not a tragedy if hero does not face tragic death. Initially hero goes through suffering and calamities leading him to tragic death. The way sufferings befall on hero is interesting in case of Shakespeare. Initially characters commit a sin or make an error of judgment that causes sufferings. The magnitude of suffering increases as the plot of the play progresses. The magnitude of suffering goes up to its maximum level in the fourth act. Sometime, sufferings are not limited to hero alone but other characters suffer too. In some tragedies, other characters also face tragic death like hero as with Othello in which innocent Desdemona was murdered

In Shakespearean tragedies, the cause of sufferings and death is not like Greek tragedies. Greek believed on destiny but Shakespeare blamed character himself responsible for his doom. A flaw in characters, known as hamartia, is responsible for suffering and death but sometime destiny play its role but on back end. Shakespearian characters are comprised of mixed traits. They are no holy man or perfect in nature. They also commit sin that cause sufferings. In short, It is perfect to say that "character is destiny" for Shakespearean tragedies.

Shakespearian tragedies do not follow three unities. Aristotle proposed the three unities: unity of place, unity of time, and unity of action. According to Aristotle, first, a tragedy must take place in a single location, for example, a city square or a house but actions in Shakespearean tragedies are on various places. One scene is at one place and the second scene may be in another city. Secondly, it would happen during one day but his plays are lengthy and do not follow the unity of time. Lastly, a tragedy would be a single story, without sub- plots or sub-sub-plots but Shakespeare has sufficient number of sub-plots in his tragedies. So in this way Shakespearean play do not follow Aristotle's three unities. Compared with these set patterns by Aristotle, Shakespeare's tragedy is a more relaxed genre.

There are some other external factors, apart from the fatal flaw of protagonist, in Shakespearean plays that handle the tragic fall of protagonist. Using supernatural machinery and chance happening are the external factors who contribute in tragic fall. These factors play a role in shaping destiny of characters. Shakespeare used supernatural elements like three witches in Macbeth and ghost in Hamlet. These elements prompt the hero to do irrational and heinous offence in the play that causes his tragic fall. In a similar way, the use of handkerchief in Othello became the cause of chance happening which made him more jealous and extreme jealousy became the cause of his fall. Although these factors contribute a lot but it is his own character which causes hero's fall.

7.6.2 Structure of Shakespearean Tragedy

Shakespearean plays usually comprise five acts, corresponding to different scenes in each act. Act one includes exposition, outlines the situation, begins the action and introduces the main characters. Act two continues the action towards further development and introduces complications in the plot. Act three comprises climax of the plot, brings everything to a head. A change of direction occurs in this act and audience realizes the sin or folly committed by protagonist that leads him towards sufferings. Act four includes further developments of act three leading inevitably to final act. Act five includes outcome and revelation that ends with the tragic death of a hero.

7.6.3 Moral Values and Poetic Justice

Shakespeare never focused on poetic justice which requires the characters to be awarded or punished with their merits and demerits accordingly. But there is only hero who suffers because of his flaw but there are some other characters who became an innocent prey of hero's flaw. On the other hand, no villainous character is left unpunished in Shakespearean plays but the destructive power of their evil is strong enough that it pulls other innocent characters into it. In Othello, Desdemona and Emilia were murdered innocently without any evil committed by them. But the intrigue plot of villain was strong enough that pushed innocent characters into tragic death. The moral values of Shakespearean tragedies do not left a pessimistic impression on readers but they feel piteous and fearful.

Thus we see that Shakespearean hero is himself responsible for his tragic end. He has some flaws in his own characters that lead to his death. For example Othello has suspicious nature which leads to his death. In case of Hamlet, he is unable to take a decision. This inability to take decision causes his death. So in every character we find some flaws in his character that lead to his death. Since the tragic hero is a man of high position, his death shatters the whole nation. The whole nation mourns his death. In his greatest tragedies, Shakespeare wants to convey the idea that in this world striving for good is always thwarted by evil and man's heroic action is always wasted because nature is always hostile to human beings. The disastrous failure of the tragic hero leads not only to his death but also to the death of many others.

7.7 SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORICAL PLAYS

Just as Shakespeare's 'comedies' have some dark themes and tragic situations while the 'tragedies' have some high comic moments, the Shakespeare 'history' plays contain comedy, tragedy and everything in between. All Shakespeare's plays are dramas written for the entertainment of the public and Shakespeare's intention in writing them was just to entertain. It wasn't Shakespeare, but Shakespearian

scholars, who categorised his plays into the areas of tragedy, comedy and history. Unfortunately, our appreciation of the plays is often affected by our tendency to look at them in that limited way.

Shakespeare composed ten plays which revolved around English history. And he had written four plays which focused on Roman history. The Roman plays can loosely be identified under history plays, but for scholarly purposes we only consider those plays which narrate the political history of England as history plays. Needless to say, the history plays are derived from the morality plays which were popular during the early 16th centuries. Overall, the patriotic spirit which engulfed England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth (especially after the defeat of Spanish Armada) that brought down the threat of foreign invasion, gave rise to such form of drama. To add to the mood the University Wits too started composing history plays thus making them more popular. It is believed that Shakespeare's professional rivalry with the University Wits like Marlowe, Greene, and Lyly made him tread this field. These plays were popularly known as chronicle plays because they were based upon the English Chronicles produced by Raphael Holinshed. Most of the history plays written by Shakespeare are actually adaptations of Holinshed's Chronicles. Shakespeare was known for borrowing heavily from his contemporaries as well as predecessors. It is argued that Holinshed's works were inspiration for both Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe. We all know that *Macbeth* and *King Lear* owe their origin to Holinshed and his Chronicles. But what might amuse the present-day audience is that Holinshed's works were not known to be historically accurate. In fact, the contemporary readers consumed it as fictional works. Critics love to identify both Holinshed and Shakespeare's writings as incidents based on historical events which were dramatized for recreational purposes. Shakespeare wrote the following ten plays who are generally classified as histories:

I - Henry IV, Part I

II - Henry IV, Part II

III - Henry V (1599)

IV - Henry VI, Part I

V - Henry VI, Part II

VI - Henry VI, Part III

VII - Henry VIII

VIII - King John

IX - Richard II

X - Richard III

These plays were immediately successful. Contemporary references indicate that audiences of the early 1590s thrilled to the story (in *Henry VI, Part I*) of the brave Lord Talbot doing battle in France against the witch Joan of Arc and her lover, the French Dauphin, but being undermined in his heroic effort by effeminacy and corruption at home. Henry VI himself is, as Shakespeare portrays him, a weak king, raised to the kingship by the early death of his father, incapable of controlling factionalism in his court, and enervated personally by his infatuation with a dangerous Frenchwoman, Margaret of Anjou. Henry VI is cuckolded by his wife and her lover, the Duke of Suffolk, and (in *Henry VI, Part II*) proves unable to defend his virtuous uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, against opportunistic enemies. The result is civil unrest, lower-class rebellion (led by Jack Cade), and eventually all-out civil war between the Lancastrian faction, nominally headed by Henry VI, and the Yorkist claimants under the leadership of Edward IV and his brothers. *Richard III* completes the saga with its account of the baleful rise of Richard of Gloucester through the murdering of his brother the Duke of Clarence and of Edward IV's two sons, who were also Richard's nephews. Richard's tyrannical reign yields eventually and inevitably to the newest and most successful claimant of the throne, Henry Tudor, earl of Richmond. This is the man who becomes Henry VII, scion of the Tudor dynasty and grandfather of Queen Elizabeth I, who reigned from 1558 to 1603 and hence during the entire first decade and more of Shakespeare's productive career.

The Shakespearean English history play told of the country's history at a time when the English nation was struggling with its own sense of national identity and experiencing a new sense of power. Queen Elizabeth had brought stability and a relative freedom from war to her decades of rule. She had held at bay the Roman Catholic powers of the Continent, notably Philip II of Spain, and, with the help of a storm at sea, had fought off Philip's attempts to invade her kingdom with the great Spanish Armada of 1588. In England the triumph of the nation was viewed universally as a divine deliverance. The second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* was at hand as a vast source for Shakespeare's historical playwriting. It, too, celebrated the emergence of England as a major Protestant power, led by a popular and astute monarch.

From the perspective of the 1590s, the history of the 15th century also seemed newly pertinent. England had emerged from a terrible civil war in 1485, with Henry Tudor's victory over Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field. The chief personages of these wars, known as the Wars of the Roses—Henry Tudor, Richard III, the duke of Buckingham, Hastings, Rivers, Gray, and many more—were very familiar to contemporary English readers.

Because these historical plays of Shakespeare in the early 1590s were so intent on telling the saga of emergent nationhood, they exhibit a strong tendency to identify villains and heroes. Shakespeare is writing dramas, not schoolbook texts, and he freely alters dates and facts and emphases. Lord Talbot in *Henry VI, Part I* is a hero because he dies defending English interests against the corrupt French. In *Henry VI, Part II* Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, is cut down by opportunists because he represents the best interests of the commoners and the nation as a whole. Most of all, Richard of Gloucester is made out to be a villain epitomizing the very worst features of a chaotic century of civil strife. He foments strife, lies, and murders and makes outrageous promises he has no intention of keeping. He is a brilliantly theatrical figure because he is so inventive and clever, but he is also deeply threatening. Shakespeare gives him every defect that popular tradition imagined: a hunchback, a baleful glittering eye, a conspiratorial genius. The real Richard was no such villain, it seems; at least, his politically inspired murders were no worse than the systematic elimination of all opposition by his successor, the historical Henry VII. The difference is that Henry VII lived to commission historians to tell the story his way, whereas Richard lost everything through defeat. As founder of the Tudor dynasty and grandfather of Queen Elizabeth, Henry VII could command a respect that even Shakespeare was bound to honour, and accordingly the Henry Tudor that he portrays at the end of *Richard III* is a God-fearing patriot and loving husband of the Yorkist princess who is to give birth to the next generation of Tudor monarchs.

Richard III is a tremendous play, both in length and in the bravura depiction of its titular protagonist. It is called a tragedy on its original title page, as are other of these early English history plays. Certainly they present us with brutal deaths and with instructive falls of great men from positions of high authority to degradation and misery. Yet these plays are not tragedies in the Classical sense of the term. They contain so much else, and notably they end on a major key: the accession to power of the Tudor dynasty that will give England its great years under Elizabeth. The story line is one of suffering and of eventual salvation, of deliverance by mighty forces of history and of divine oversight that will not allow England to continue to suffer once she has returned to the true path of duty and decency. In this important sense, the early history plays are like tragicomedies or romances.

The histories written by William Shakespeare can be categorized into two major segments. The first tetralogy consists of three parts of Henry VI and Richard III. While the second tetralogy comprises of required to and the two parts of Henry IV as well as Henry V. Though on the surface level, this appears to be a harmless arrangement, but a deeper analysis will only highlight the problem aspect of this arrangement. The second tetralogy which was written years after the first tetralogy actually narrates events that took place much before. So commonsensically that would imply, Shakespeare started work on

first sequence of history plays and ended it with Richard III. After that he decided to start oppressed sequence of history beginning with Richard II. This kind of an arrangement also bring him to mind the thought that probably Shakespeare never intended to have the series completed. But the sequence of this plays also makes things problematic because they do not fit into the pattern. Edward III, King John and Henry VIII have hardly any connection with the tetralogies. Scholars have often insisted on treating each of the history plays as independent pieces. For example, let us consider, Richard of Gloucester, who is later identified as Richard III appears to be completely different in Richard III. Again, it is completely impossible to relate the unimpressive Henry V with the smart Hal who seems to be very witty. Even the two parts of Henry IV that appears to have been written together are totally different from each other. Needless to say, history itself becomes a problem for the historical plays. After all the actual nature of history, the existing facts always create an intense tension while creating a fictional account of the history. Oscillating somewhere that is neither fact nor fiction, the historical plays seem to be in the lookout for a new history. The historical plays try to look at history as play itself while dramatising the history and giving us a glimpse of how the people would have been engaged in creating that "history". In general, drama and history share complex relationship. Drama is meant to narrate a story. It is a different form of art because it is supposed to be performed. Meanings are encoded not just in the speech but also in the movements of the actors who performs on stage. A dramatised history brings into light a form of 'history' that was probably never experienced by anyone before. We come across people from the past with different understanding and knowledge who might have performed in a similar manner in their 'real' lives. Like most of his other popular works Shakespeare's historical plays are also based on works created by his predecessor. Some of the major works that has influence his place are: The Mirror for Magistrates (1559), Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia* (published in four distinct variations in 1512-13, 1534, 1546 and 1555), Hall's *The Union of the Two Noble* and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York (1542, 1548 and 1550), Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1577, 1587), Daniel's *The First Four Books of the Civil Wars* (1595) and Sir Thomas More's *History of King Richard III* (1543). Shakespeare generously adapts the not so authentic stories from *The Chronicles* and intertwined characters and understanding which are his own, thus inventing a new reality. Even though Shakespeare sources provides us with valuable ways to understand a text, without a doubt there always remains a comparison between the chronicle and drama. The new kind of history that he created give an opportunity to the audience to bring the non-existing historical figures closer to them while questioning about the understanding the head about the glorious history.

Shakespeare's history plays are enormously appealing. Not only do they give insight into the political processes of medieval and renaissance politics but they also offer a glimpse of life from the top to the

very bottom of society – the royal court, the nobility, tavern life, brothels, beggars, everything. The greatest English actual and fictional hero, Henry V, and the most notorious fictional bounder, Falstaff, are seen in several scenes together. Not only that, but those scenes are among the most entertaining, profound, and memorable in the whole of English literature.

7.8 SHAKESPEAREAN STAGE

In the Elizabethan age, a play was written for the stage. Closet drama, a popular expression today which is not meant to be staged was something unheard of. During the Elizabethan era, theatre functioned as a medium of public amusement. That is why it instantly became popular. The popularity of plays laid the foundation for the establishment of both public as well as private playhouses. More than a hundred companies came into existence during the time comprising both amateurs as well as lay men. In the early part of the 16th century, there were mainly two types of theatre in England. One was represented by small groups of professional actors who performed in halls, inns, or marketplaces. The location of a play was indicated by the words and gestures of the actors. The second type of theatre was made up of amateurs, usually university students, performing for the royal court and assorted gentry. The audience and the actors were educated, acquainted with the classics, and knowledgeable about theatre in other countries, particularly France. The stage was probably set with buildings made of laths, covered with painted canvas, with cloud borders masking the upper part of the acting area.

Shakespeare and all the contemporary dramatists were essentially men of theatre. James Burbage built the 'Theatre' just outside London in 1576. In Shakespeare's time, a stage wasn't just one type of space; plays had to be versatile. The same play might be produced in an outdoor playhouse, an indoor theater, a royal palace or for a company on tour, the courtyard of an inn. In such theatres, men and boys played all the characters, whether they were male or female. Acting in Renaissance England was an exclusively male profession. Audiences had their favourite performers, looked forward to hearing music with the productions, and relished the luxurious costumes of the leading characters. The stage itself was relatively bare. For the most part, playwrights used vivid words instead of scenery to picture the scene onstage. The Theatre was among the first playhouses in England since Roman times. Like the many other playhouses that followed, it was a multi-sided structure with a central, uncovered "yard" surrounded by three tiers of covered seating and a bare, raised stage at one end of the yard. Spectators could pay for seating at multiple price levels; those with the cheapest tickets simply stood for the length of the plays.

The construction of the 'Globe Theatre' in 1599 is a landmark in the history of the Elizabethan stage. Being expired the lease of the 'Theatre' the Burbage brothers had to dismantle their 'Theatre' and began

to construct a new, larger playhouse, the Globe, just south of the Thames. To pay for it, they shared the lease with the five partners (called actor-sharers) in the Lord Chamberlain's company, including Shakespeare. The Globe, which opened in 1599, became the playhouse where audiences first saw some of Shakespeare's best-known plays. In 1613, it burned to the ground when the roof caught fire during a performance of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. A new, second Globe was quickly built on the same site, opening in 1614. Large open playhouses like the Globe were marvellous in the right weather, but indoor theatres could operate year-round, out of the sun, wind, and rain. They also offered a more intimate setting with the use of artificial light. Shakespeare's company planned for years to operate its indoor theatre, a goal that was finally achieved in 1609 when the Burbages took over London's Blackfriars Theatre. Playgoers in Shakespeare's day paid a penny to stand in the uncovered yard of a playhouse, or two pennies for a balcony seat. (It's hard to find exact comparisons to what a penny then is worth now, but a day's worth of food and drink for a grown man would have cost about four pence.) Indoor theatres like the Blackfriars accommodated fewer people and cost more, with basic tickets starting at sixpence. Fashionable men about town could get a seat on the side of the stage for two shillings (24 pence).

Spectators liked to drink wine or ale and snack on a variety of foods as they watched the plays—modern-day excavations at the playhouses have turned up bottles, spoons, oyster shells, and the remnants of many fruits and nuts. While most women's roles were played by boys or young men in the all-male casts, comic female parts such as Juliet's Nurse might be reserved for a popular adult comic actor or clown. In addition to their dramatic talents, actors in Shakespeare's time had to fence onstage with great skill, sing songs or play instruments included in the plays, and perform the vigorously athletic dances of their day. Actors usually did not aim for historically accurate costumes, although an occasional toga may have appeared for a Roman play. Instead, they typically wore gorgeous modern dresses, especially for the leading parts. Costumes, a major investment for an acting company, provided the essential "spectacle" of the plays and were often second-hand clothes once owned and worn by real-life nobles.

The bare stages of Shakespeare's day had little or no scenery except for objects required by the plot, like a throne, a grave, or a bed. Exits and entrances were in plain view of the audience, but they included some vertical options: actors could descend from the "heavens" above the stage or enter and exit from the "hell" below through a trapdoor. Characters described as talking from "above" might appear in galleries midway between the stage and the heavens. In 1642, the English playhouses and theatres were closed down (and often dismantled for building materials) as the English Civil War began. With the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, theatre returned—as did Shakespeare's plays, now with both male and

female performers. The first recorded performance of an actress occurred in December 1660, although we're not sure of her name; she appeared as Desdemona in *Othello*.

The typical Elizabethan stage was a platform, as large as 40 feet square (more than 12 metres on each side), sticking out into the middle of the yard so that the spectators nearly surrounded it. It was raised four to six feet and was sheltered by a roof, called "the shadow" or "the heavens." In most theatres, the stage roof, supported by two pillars set midway at the sides of the stage, concealed an upper area from which objects could be raised or lowered. At the rear of the stage was a multileveled facade with two large doors at the stage level. There was also a space for "discoveries" of hidden characters, to advance the plot; this was probably located between the doors. Some scenes took place in a playing area on the second level of the facade, but, again, historians disagree as to which scenes they were. Properties were occasionally carried onto the platform stage, but from extant lists, it is obvious that they were few. Some properties were so cumbersome that they remained onstage throughout a performance. Smaller properties were probably revealed in the discovery space, and servants carried some properties on and off. It appears that the audience was not concerned by the scenic inconsistencies.

All of the theatre buildings were round, square, or octagonal, with thatched roofs covering the structure surrounding an open courtyard. Spectators, depending on how much money they had, could either stand in the yard, which may have sloped toward the stage, sit on benches in the galleries that went around the greater part of the walls, sit in one of the private boxes, or sit on a stool on the stage proper.

The Elizabethan stage might not have the elaborate machinery that the modern stage claims to possess. M.C. Bradbrook says "The chief characteristics of the Elizabethan stage was its neutrality and its corresponding virtue, flexibility". It would not be wrong to say that theatres were extremely popular during the Elizabethan era. There are no official records or statistics that can confirm the level of popularity of these theatres. The closing down of the theatres in the year 1642 after the Puritan revolution, clearly indicates that drama as a form was extremely popular in the period and it did threaten the authorities with its popularity. It probably indicated that there was the chance of drama influencing people resulting in them questioning the existing moral order and hence creating a social disturbance.

7.9 THE UNIVERSALITY OF SHAKESPEARE AND HIS CRAFTSMANSHIP

William Shakespeare has become today a citizen of the world. More than four centuries have passed since his death but he remains like a twinkling star in our minds. He is often hailed as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's most renowned playwright. He has left an indelible mark on literature with his vast body of work. His plays and sonnets continue to captivate readers and audiences,

transcending time and cultural boundaries. There are few if any, other authors who can claim to be truly of universal significance, whose work has stood the test of time, overcoming the fickle goddess of passing fashions and changing tastes. Universal in the sense that different cultures and successive generations have found inspiration in their works and have decided to re-interpret them again and again. Even without the magic of his language, his tales have travelled well through space and time: across cultures, generations, and mediums. The plays and their countless transmogrifications into dramatic movies bear witness to that universal appeal. A Russian Hamlet, a Japanese Macbeth, an Egyptian Lear, a French Romeo…. Shakespeare is vast enough to engender all of that and more.

Shakespeare does not remain a mere British heritage. He has planted his feet across the uncharted seas and oceans. The world has witnessed several political and social changes from the age of Elizabeth to the present complex time but amidst the vast changes, Shakespeare is still firm and steady like the pole star in the matter of his popularity, shedding undying lustre. In 1964 all the countries of the world, irrespective of political affiliations paid their warm tributes to Shakespeare on the occasion of the fourth centenary of his birthday. A product of the Renaissance, Shakespeare has his eye finely rolling across the subtlety and magnificence of the world, the exuberance of life and joy in living. His creations are a record of the full gamut of human longings and feelings.

Several aspects of his writings are made him and his creations immortal and almost unsurpassed denying Time and Space. They have swum across the steam of time, and have reached the posterity. Their majesty, their romance, their frolic and fun, their love and hatred, and their zest for life are not ephemeral. They bear the stamp of the fundamentals of life, which age cannot wither nor custom stale.

Gender equity is certainly an issue of our time. It was only in the 1920s that women gained the right to vote, and they remain discriminated against in almost every society to this day. However, we find the example of strong and intelligent women, such as Portia in *The Merchant of Venice,* who- disguised as a man – argues with Shylock in some of the most famous passages of the English language:

The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
'T is mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown:
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,

The attributes to awe and majesty,

Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;

But mercy is above this sceptred sway;

It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,

It is an attribute to God himself;

And earthly power doth then show likest God's

When mercy seasons justice.

One of the most notable aspects of Shakespeare's writing is his extraordinary command of the English language. His plays and sonnets are characterized by their rich vocabulary, inventive wordplay, and striking use of metaphor and simile. His ability to manipulate language allowed him to convey complex ideas and emotions with clarity and power, creating lines and phrases that have become an integral part of the English literary canon. Shakespeare had a unique command of the English language. He played with words and rhythm and had a unique way of giving his language life and energy. In many of his texts, he used what is called 'blank verse' which is a style of poetry that does not rhyme, but has a certain rhythmic pattern or metre. The use of a regular meter made it easier for the actors to memorise their lines, and it is pleasing to listen to.

The following passage is from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. In this scene, Macbeth is being overtaken by guilt and madness after he has committed murder. Read it aloud and see if you are able to feel the rhythm of the text.

Macbeth, Act II, Scene I

Is this a dagger which I see before me,

The handle toward my hand?

Come, let me clutch thee.

I have thee not and yet I see thee still.

Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible

To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but

A dagger of the mind, a false creation,

Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?

Shakespeare had a seemingly enormous vocabulary. He used more than 20,000 different words in his plays and poems, and it is also estimated that he created more than 1,700 words. Many of these words were probably already part of the everyday Elizabethan language, but he was the first to put them down

on paper. He would frequently alter existing words and use them in new ways, for example by combining two words, adding prefixes or suffixes to words, or changing adjectives into verbs or verbs into nouns. In addition to individual words, there are also many common idioms and expressions that can be credited to Shakespeare, such as 'to break the ice', 'to be in a pickle', and 'to lie low'.

Shakespeare enriched the English language so much that it is almost impossible to fully gauge his impact. Without him, the English vocabulary would have been very different. 400 years later, we are still using many of his words and expressions in our everyday speech and as a natural part of our language.

Here is a list of some very common words attributed to Shakespeare:

alligator *(Romeo and Juliet, Act V, Scene I)*

bedroom *(A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act II, Scene II)*

downstairs *(Henry IV Part I, Act II, Scene IV)*

fashionable *(Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene III)*

gossip *(The Comedy of Errors, Act V, Scene I)*

hurry *(The Comedy of Errors, Act V, Scene I)*

lonely *(Coriolanus, Act IV, Scene I)*

obscene *(Love's Labour's Lost, Act I, Scene I)*

questioning *(As You Like It, Act V, Scene IV)*

traditional *(Richard III, Act III, Scene I)*

worthless *(The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Act IV, Scene II)*

Shakespeare's enduring appeal can also be attributed to his profound understanding of human nature. His characters are multifaceted and psychologically complex, displaying a wide range of emotions and motivations that resonate with audiences across generations and cultures. From the tormented Prince Hamlet grappling with grief and indecision to the ambitious and ruthless Macbeth, Shakespeare's characters offer timeless insights into the human experience, allowing readers and viewers to identify with their struggles, desires, and moral dilemmas. Just like modern-day humans, we witness Shakespeare's characters live the full range of the human experience from youthful wonder, innocence and first love, to extreme experiences of guilt, grief, loss, hate, prejudice, persecution and rebellion. We

see characters in intimate domestic settings right through to all-out war on battlefields. We see characters fall in love, right through to characters who murder or torture others. Of course, the journey is not all dark, as we know the human experience is one of light and shade. Throughout his plays, we witness how individual and collective human experiences differ. We can see the complexity and anomalies in human behaviour, and the paradoxes that exist often within the same experience. For many of Shakespeare's characters, we see their journey end with facing the end of life, as we must all do one day. He gives us a remarkable speech by Emelia near the end of Othello: "Let husbands know their wives have sense like them: they see and smell and have their palates both for sweet and sour, as husbands have. What is it that they do when they change us for others? Is it sport? I think it is: and doth affection breed it? I think it doth: is't frailty that thus errs? It is so too: and have not we affections, desires for sport, and frailty, as men have?"

Shakespeare's works explore darker emotions such as lust, greed, and jealousy. These themes can be seen in plays like *Othello* and *Macbeth*, where characters' desires for power and wealth lead to their downfall. The consequences of these base desires are still relevant today and continue to be explored in modern literature and media. Shakespeare's works also deal with issues of hatred and separation, often through depictions of war and conflict. For example, in *Romeo and Juliet*, the titular characters' families' longstanding feud leads to their tragic separation. This theme of division and the human cost of conflict is still relevant today, as we continue to see the devastating impact of wars and political divisions across the world.

Love and morality are also common themes in Shakespeare's works. His plays often explore the complexities of human relationships, such as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where the characters navigate issues of love and fidelity. His nuanced portrayal of these themes continues to be relevant today, as people continue to grapple with the challenges of love, ethics, and morality. Shakespeare's works tackle a diverse array of themes, many of which continue to hold relevance in contemporary society. Love, jealousy, betrayal, ambition, power, and the complexities of human relationships are just a few of the subjects that he masterfully explores in his plays and sonnets. By delving into these universal themes, Shakespeare's writing transcends time and remains relatable to audiences' centuries after his death.

William Shakespeare's extraordinary body of work stands as a testament to his unparalleled genius and enduring appeal. Through his plays and sonnets, he has captured the essence of the human experience in all its complexity, giving voice to our deepest emotions, desires, and struggles. As we continue to explore, study, and enjoy his timeless creations, we are reminded of the power of language and the enduring capacity of art to illuminate our lives and connect us to one another.

Shakespeare has not expressed the thoughts of the Elizabethans alone. The human soul finds its full expression in his works, and all men, irrespective of age and country have found in it an echo of their own emotions longings and aspirations. In a world that is constantly changing, the legacy of William Shakespeare serves as a reminder of the universality of human experience and the enduring power of literature to touch our hearts and minds. Dryden has no hesitation in saying that, "He was a man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul...." As we celebrate his remarkable achievements and appreciate the genius behind his timeless plays and sonnets, we also reaffirm our commitment to preserving and promoting the rich literary heritage that he has bequeathed to us, ensuring that his works continue to inspire, enlighten, and entertain generations to come.

7.10 LET'S US SUM UP

Being a universal playwright and poet, Shakespeare holds a unique position among magnificent literary stars and shines alone brightly to enlighten the literary horizon of world literature. He is considered one of the greatest writers to ever use the English language. He is also the most famous playwright in the world, with his plays being translated in over 50 languages and performed across the globe for audiences of all ages. Known colloquially as "The Bard" or "The Bard of Avon," Shakespeare was also an actor and the creator of the Globe Theatre. In this unit we have the discussions over Shakespeare as a poet, dramatist, actor and the man who was deeply indulged with human follies resulting in his destruction. He has measured the unfathomed depth of human heart and has revealed the inner character of a human personality in a particular situation. We have discussed Shakespeare's life and works with special reference to his sonnets, comedies and tragedies. Further the discussion expands over the Elizabethan age, its main tendencies, Shakespearean stage and understanding the craftsmanship of William Shakespeare.

7.11 GLOSSARY

• Supernaturalism: It is the belief in an otherworldly realm or reality that, in one way or another, is commonly associated with all forms of religion.

• Realism: It is the attitude or practice of accepting a situation as it is and being prepared to deal with it accordingly.

• Romanticism: It is a movement in the arts and literature that originated in the late 18th century, emphasizing inspiration, subjectivity, and the primacy of the individual.

• Restoration: It was the event in 1660 when Charles the Second became King of England, Scotland, and Ireland after a period when there had been no King or Queen.

Patriotism: Patriotism is the feeling of love, devotion, and a sense of attachment to one's country.

Nationalism: The desire of a group of people who share the same race, culture, language, etc. to form an independent country.

Unprecedented: Never having happened or existed before

Variegated: Having spots or marks of a different colour

Puissant: Having great power or influence.

Invincible: Too strong or powerful to be defeated

Doggerel: Comic verse composed in irregular rhythm. Verse or words that are badly written or expressed.

Sexton: A person who looks after a church and churchyard, typically acting as bell-ringer and gravedigger.

7.12 QUESTIONS

1. To whom was Shakespeare's poem 'Venus and Adonis' dedicated?

2. What is the significance of the period 1594 to 1600, in Shakespeare's literary life?

3. Write a short-note on the features of Elizabethan theatre.

4. How were historical and political elements incorporated in the play? What were their significance?

5. What led to the close of theatre? What threatened its popularity during the Elizabethan era?

6. Give a descriptive analysis of Shakespearean comedy. What were the major plots of Shakespeare's comedies? Give examples for your answer.

7. Differentiate between Shakespearean tragedy and comedy. What is a tragicomedy?.

8. Discuss the characteristics of a tragic hero.

9. What is a tragedy? What were Aristotle's thoughts on the same?

10. How do the characters in Shakespearean tragedies justify their roles? Discuss

7.13 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 8 EDMUND SPENSER, PHILIP SIDNEY, BEN JONSON AND OTHER IMPORTANT WRITERS

Structure

8.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit you will be acquainted with the life and major works of Edmund Spenser having a glimpse of his poetic style and his contribution in English poetry. This unit will be helpful in understanding *The Faerie Queene* as an allegory. The unit will examine some of the literary, political and personal factors that inflected his writings, specifically the nature of patronage poetry and the ways in which it influenced his work. It will look at some personal dimensions of his life as they bear on his work, as for instance his courtship and marriage to Elizabeth Boyle, or the impact of the conflicts between his religious training and his readings in Platonic philosophy. Apart from this, the unit will also acquaint you with writers as Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson and other important writers with their works. After a careful study of this unit you will have the understanding of some important aspects of literary style and the literary tendencies of this era. Spenser, Sidney and Jonson are among the few writers of the world whom we still recognise for their beauty of art.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit aims to introduce you to Edmund Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson and some other important writers of the Elizabethan era. Spenser was an English poet best known for *The Faerie Queene*, an epic poem and fantastical allegory celebrating the Tudor dynasty and Elizabeth I. It is one of the greatest poems in the English language which is written in what came to be called the Spenserian stanza. Edmund Spenser is one of the biggest names in English literature. He produced exemplary works of the highest merit and filled the void which was left after Chaucer. In this unit, we will study some of the most important texts of the Renaissance, its artistic styles and aesthetic concerns by writers like Spenser, Sidney and Ben Jonson among others. We will learn about the political, social and literary background and pick up some of the most important works of these writers. Sidney has written several major works of poetry and criticism, but he wrote for his own circle of friends and did not allow his works to be published within his lifetime. Ben Jonson a Jacobean or Elizabethan playwright, poet and critic is best known for the satirical plays. Jonson is considered to be the next best English dramatist, after William Shakespeare, of the Elizabethan era.

8.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR (EDMUND SPENSER)

Among the greater writers of the age none is as truly and characteristically Elizabethan as Edmund Spenser. Like Shakespeare he rose from a humble background to a position of wealth and fame, showing an extraordinary ability to deal with the world on its own terms. He fully reflected the character of

England's spiritual conflict. His sensitive genius responded like a musical instrument to each of the separate influences by which his age was stirred. In his works, we find a reverence for the Catholic tradition, and also for the moral earnestness of the reforming Protestant.

8.2.1 Life and Works

The poet's poet, the author of *The Faerie Queene* was "a little man, who wore short hairs, little hands and little cuffs." A slight figure, surmounted by a fine head, his face ore every mark refinement, with its lively backward-sloping forehead, its thin mobile lips, grey blue eyes, auburn hair and pointed beard. He was a perfect courtier, half-gallant and half soldier. Edmund Spenser, the son of John Spenser and Elizabeth Spenser was born in 1552 in London. He had various epithets to his credit like "The Poet's Poet", "The Prince of Poets", "Mulla's Bard", "The Sunrise of English Poetry", and "The Rubens of English Poetry". His father was a dress maker. He lived in the East Smithfield, near the Tower of London. He had one brother and one sister named John and Elizabeth respectively. His father was not very rich. His brother and his sister could not get education in a big institution. But he was a bright pupil of Mulcaster, a keen scholar. He received his degree of M.A. in 1576 from Cambridge University. Gabriel Harvey, a scholar of eminence became his friend at Cambridge. After his life at Cambridge he fell in love with a lady of higher social pretentions. He did not receive his love back from this lady. He kept on doing efforts to win the heart of this lady. He portrayed her as Rosalind in his various future works. It is also said that she belonged to a good family and appreciated greatly the imagination and calibre of the man who had fallen in love with her, but she got married to another person.

On Gabriel Harvey's advice he left Shire and went to London, where he met the Earl of Leicester, and Sir Philip Sidney. These two people were prominent figures of the Queen's court. With the help of Sir Philip Sidney he was appointed Secretary to Lord Grey De Wilton. He went to Ireland with Lord Grey and lived there for rest of his life. In Ireland his talent was soon rewarded with the Kilcolman Castle with three hundred and two acres of land surrounding it. He got married with Elizabeth Boyle in 1594. Amoretti is a sonnet – sequence that celebrates Spenser's love for Elizabeth Boyle. During the period of revolt in Ireland his house was burnt. He escaped with his wife and children. It is believed that in this fire he lost his one child and some unfinished parts of The Faerie Queene. On December 24, 1598 he reached London. After sometime he died on 16th January 1599. According to Ben Jonson he died, "for lack of bread." His body got buried in the Westminster Abbey, near Chaucer's tomb. As per William J. Long, "From the shock of this frightful experience Spenser never recovered. He returned to England heartbroken, and in the following year (1599) he died in an inn at Westminster….. He was buried beside

his master Chaucer in Westminster Abbey, the poets of that age thronging to his funeral and, according to Camden, "casting their elegies and the pens that had written them into his tomb."

Spenser's fame rests on his great works. His very first remarkable work was *The Shepheardes Calender (1579)*. It contains twelve pastoral eclogues. Here the shepherd Colin Clout is the portrait of the poet himself. The other shepherd Hobbinol represents his friend Gabriel Harvey. In this work we find five different forms of stanzas in heroic or deca-syllabic lines. Sir Philip Sidney in *An Apologie for Poetry* writes: "The Shepherd's calendar hath much Poetrie in his Aeglogues: indeed worthy of the reading, if I be not deceived."

The Complaints (1591) is a collection of small poems. The very first poem in this collection is *The Ruins of Time*. The pain of nine Muses is expressed in *The Tears of the Muses*. *Mother Hubberd's Tale (1591)* satirizes Lord Burghley and the Duke of Anjou, in form of a table. In *Daphnaida (1591)* he invented a new form of stanza. It clearly shows the influence of Geoffrey Chaucer on Spenser. *Colin Clouts Come Home Again (1595)* is pastoral poem with autobiographical sketch of the poet himself. Here he expresses his dissatisfaction with the life of the Queen Elizabeth's court. *Astrophel (1595)* is a pastoral poem that presents an allegory of the life and death of Sir Philip Sidney. Astrophel was the title that Sidney chose for himself in his own sonnet – sequence *Astrophel and Stella*. *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion (1595)* is a collection of 88 love sonnets. Here he expressed his love and strong feelings for Elizabeth Boyle whom he loved and married. Epithalamion contains 23 sonnets. *Prothalamion (1596)* is written in honour of the wedding of the two daughters of the Earl of Worcester. *The Four Hymns (1596)* he writes in honour of love and beauty. *The Faerie Queene (1590, 1596)* is Spenser's masterpiece. Sir Walter Raleigh, a fellow colonist often visited Spenser at Kilcoman Castle. He was very much impressed seeing Spenser's The Faerie Queen and convinced him to take the first three books to Queen Elizabeth. The queen was highly impressed seeing the book and he was awarded a handsome pension of fifty pounds a year for life. The Faerie Queen, which is an unfinished epic poem in twelve books, established Spenser's reputation as a writer. Like the, *The Shepheardes Calender, The Faerie Queene* also makes use of archaic language and combines two literary forms, the romance and the epic, into an allegory about "the twelve moral virtues." In the words of Emile Legouis; "He worked at it for twenty years, and left it unfinished at his death. It was his own supreme ambition and the supreme pride of England, which confidently pitted his poem, as soon as its first three books appeared, against the most famous epics of ancient and modern times."

Spenser was a prolific experimenter of the verse form. His *Shepheardes Calender,* makes use of thirteen different metres. He also adapted the Italian canzone forms for *Epithalamion* and *Prothalamion*. In *The Faerie Queene* he makes use of the nine- line stanza which is named the Spenserian stanza after him.

Spenser can be called the pioneer of English versification and many later English poets learned the art of versification from him. It is for this reason Charles Lamb called Spenser the "Poet's Poet." Spenser's influence may be seen in Shelley's *Revolt of Islam*, Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Keats' *Eve of St. Agnes* and Tennyson's *The Lotus Eaters*.

The Faerie Queene by Edmund Spenser is a renowned epic poem characterised by its extensive use of allegory. An allegory is a literary device, which is Greek in origin and means 'speaking in other terms'. It is a way of representing thought and experience through images, by means of which complex ideas may be simplified or abstract, spiritual or mysterious ideas and experiences may be made tangible. Allegory conveys a message to the readers by means of symbolic figures. *The Faerie Queene* employs religious, political and Platonic allegories to convey the writer's deeply felt concerns. The allegorical elements in *"The Faerie Queene"* allow Spenser to explore and convey complex themes and messages. This poem is a monumental work of Renaissance English literature known for its rich allegorical content. Written in the late 16th century, this epic poem is an allegory in six books (plus two unfinished books) that serves as a celebration of the Tudor monarchy, an exploration of moral and religious themes, and a reflection on the virtues and vices of humanity. In a completely allegorical context, the poem follows several knights in an examination of several virtues. The Redcross knight in Book I is the knight of Holiness, and also saint George, the patron saint of England. Similarly, Sir Guyon in Book II is the knight of Temperance. In Book III, the female knight Britomart and the knight Chastity represent chaste love leading to marriage. The protagonists of Books IV, V and VI represent Friendship, Justice and Courtesy. In the book both the Faerie Queene and Britomart are personifications of Queen Elizabeth. There is also an allusion to various events and important persons in both England and Ireland like Queen Elizabeth, her rival Mary, Queen of Scots, the Spanish Armada, the English Reformation, the religious controversies and the bitter colonial struggles against Irish rebellion. The book also is a spiritual allegory as it presents the Christian (the Redcross Knight) struggling heroically against evil forces and temptations like doctrinal error, hypocrisy, seven deadly sins and despair, to some of which he bows down at times, but finally emerges victorious. Thus, *The Faerie Queene* is a fascinating story with layers of meanings to it which convey Spenser's deeply felt ideas as a poet and a nationalist.

The Faerie Queene is an incomplete English epic poem written by Edmund Spenser. Epic is a long, often book-length, narrative in verse form that retells the heroic journey of a single person, or group of persons. The word "epic" comes from Latin epicus and from Greek epikos, meaning "a word; a story; poetry in heroic verse." The elements that typically distinguish epics include superhuman deeds, fabulous adventures, highly stylized language, and a blending of lyrical and dramatic traditions, which also extend

to defining heroic verse. *The Faerie Queene's* Books I–III were first published in 1590, then republished in 1596 together with books IV–VI. *The Faerie Queene* is notable for its form: at over 36,000 lines and over 4,000 stanzas, it is one of the longest poems in the English language. It is the work in which Spenser invented the verse form known as the Spenserian stanza. It is modeled on Virgil's Aeneid and like it each book is divided into twelve cantos. Book I of *The Faerie Queene* can be called complete in itself and has been called a miniature epic. The book revolves around the exploits of the protagonist Redcrosse and how he emerges victorious in the end. *The Faerie Queene* begins with the invocation of a muse. In order to gain inspiration for the writing of his epic work, Spenser calls upon the classic authors, Virgil and Homer as his muses:

Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,

As time her taught, in lowly Shepheards weeds,

Am now enforst a far vnfitter taske,

For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,

And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds;

Whose prayses hauing slept in silence long,

Me, all too meane, the sacred Muse areeds

To blazon broad emongst her learned throng:

     Fierce warres and faithfull loues shall moralize my song.

After the invocation of the Muse, Spenser prepares for the journey which is an essential component of epic. Examples of this digression can be found in Virgil's *The Aeneid*. And likewise, Spenser continues the classic tradition in Book I with Duessa's decent to hell with hopes to bring the recently deceased Sansjoy back to life with the help of Night:

Thence turning backe in silence soft they stole,

And brought the heauie corse with easie pace

To yawning gulfe of deepe Auernus hole.

By that same hole an entrance darke and bace

With smoake and sulphure hiding all the place,

Descends to hell: there creature neuer past,

That backe returned without heauenly grace;

But dreadfull Furies, which their chaines haue brast,

And damned sprights sent forth to make ill men aghast.

He uses frequent long speeches in elevated tone. He also uses the epithets frequently and renames them (particularly characters) by stock phrases. The Red – Cross Knight has been referred as "the valiant Elfe", "the Elfin Knight" and "the Champion", and Una is referred as "faithful Dame" and "that Lady milde". It also focuses on the adventures of the hero. The hero faces various problems in his quest and is rewarded finally. In case of the Faerie Queene Book I Red – Cross Knight is the hero, who goes on a quest with fair and faithful Una, and his Dwarf servant. This hero is embodiment of goodness and virtues. Finally he successfully kills the dragon makes the parents of Una free from the terror.

In *The Faerie Queene,* the characters are drawn from the Middle Ages. They are not ordinary people but the valiant knights and ladies, magicians, witches, hydra – headed monsters like foul Error and the giants like Orgoglio. Spenser's use of magic, black arts, and witchcraft represents medieval superstition. A long chain of noble knights and ladies presents a vast picture of Middle Ages. They represent various virtues such as King Arthur represents Magnificence and Red – Cross Knight represents Holiness. Spenser was greatly influenced by Plato. Plato's perspective inspired him to use this device of allegory in his Faerie Queene. He used symbols to explain abstract ideas and themes. Critics believe that Spenser used allegory as a device only to follow the vogue of the day because a work without this device was considered below standard or mean. He portrayed the figure of Gloriana that represents Queen Elizabeth. He glorifies her as an embodiment of ideal virtue and beauty. Spenser's intention behind such glorification was to win some personal benefits and advantages from the Queene. Spenser was aware of all the other necessary components that are required to compose an epic poem and incorporated them in his work. David, in the Norton Anthology says, "If The Faerie Queene is thus an epic celebration of human heroism, Queen Elizabeth, the Protestant faith, and the English nation, it is also a chivalric romance, full of jousting knights and damsels in distress, dragons, witches, enchanted trees, wicked magicians, giants, dark caves, shining castles…As a romance, Spenser's poem is designed to produce wonder, to enthrall its readers with spawling plots, marvelous adventures, heroic characters, ravishing descriptions, and esoteric mysteries."

8.2.2 Poetic Style of Edmund Spenser

Edmund Spenser is often remembered as the 'Poet's Poet'. In fact Spenser's gravestone in Westminster Abbey has a quote rightly labelling him as 'The Prince of Poets of All Time....' In Spenser's poems, we find a fine balance of rhythm and rhyme. Spenser was a connoisseur of art and a lover and physical beauty and celebrated it in his works. Thus, he captured the beauty in nature, art and human beings in his works brilliantly. His works are an embodiment of love and purity. Spenser was a prominent Renaissance poet and his poetry reflected a Renaissance spirit with Platonic idealism. Spenser was a poet of sensuous images. However, he was an iconoclast too, who was "deeply suspicious of the power of images (material and verbal) to turn into idols." His works are also filled with archaic words and for that reason he is often referred to as a backward -looking poet. However, as mentioned earlier, Spenser used archaic words in order to pay homage to Chaucer, of whom he was a great admirer. Spenser's poems reflect the classical epic forms. Like the classical epics they begin with an invocation of the Muses and have an epic hero. For example, in the beginning of *The Faerie Queene Book I*, Spenser invokes the Muses. It also has a hero, The Redcrosse Knight, who is the knight of Holiness. Spenser makes extensive use figures of speech, especially similes and extended metaphor in his works. One also finds various allusions of classical epics like Homer's *Illiad and Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* and Aristo's *Orlando Furioso*. There is symmetry in form e.g., parallels between characters such as Arthur & Lucifer, Una & Duessa, etc., and between settings the House of Pride & the House of Holiness. In the words of David in *The Norton Anthology*, Spenser was "an idealist, drawn to courtesy, gentleness, and exquisite moral refinement, yet also a celebrant of English nationalism, empire, and material power...as a British epic poet and poet-prophet, he points forward to the poetry of the Romantics and especially Milton who himself paid homage to the "sage and serious" Senser as "a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas."

Spenser is undoubtedly the "Poetic son of Chaucer". As a poet, Spenser always wanted to innovatively expand the language. His works do not follow a strict lingo and he encouraged the use of archaic and rustic expressions. Spenser's fine style always ranged from housing classicisms to conversions of foreign words. In every poem, Spenser significantly elevated the elegant use of archaic idioms & native expressions thereby making the lines sound elegant and exotic.

Previously, poets considered classicism boring and weakly expressive & never used any of such words in their works. On the other hand Spenser made his peers understand that linguistics positively develops with fine discovery of new words. Spenser at the outset did not follow any sort of dialect either. What makes his verses unsurpassed is that the sincere blend of rustic & archaic idioms, transparent phraseology, quasi-medieval diction, fair amount of classicism and some adaptations from the northern

dialect. The light of renaissance shone brightly in works of Spenser, he ardently supported novelty in English language and envisioned it as a benchmark of developmental era.

Spenser's style of writing included epithets, alliterations and iambic hexameter which add to the rhyme and rhythm of the verse. Epithets that Spenser used decorated the content and never gave any actual meaning. Spenser as a verbal expert can mesmerize readers with sweet musical lines of lyrical intensity. Spenser's grammar is simpler, lucid and embraced fresh technicalities like the alexandrine or the iambic hexametre. The iambic hexametre could be divided into 12 syllables or six phrases which brought in a beautiful halt at the end of the stanza & sometimes also accounted to summarizing the meaning of the stanza or representing one complete portion of the scene in the stanza.

As an outstanding poet of non-dramatic renaissance, Spenser's got it all...With opulent musical lines, harmony of rhyme and rhythm & grammatical simplicity with modernization of linguistic entities, Spenser still rules for his uniqueness.

8.2.3 Spenser's Contribution as a Poet

Spenser's reputation among his contemporaries was of the highest. No other English poet ever won more immediate and abiding recognition than he. *The Shepheardes Calender* was at once accepted as a masterpiece, and when *The Faerie Queene* appeared, there was no one to challenge his right the heritage of Chaucer. He had fulfilled the expectation of learned, wealthy and powerful England, ready for a great poem, and who, till then, had lacked it. Spenser's contribution to the field of English poetry is immense. He had a lifelong interest in theories of poetry and he is recognised as one of the great inventors in the English verse form. His Spenserian stanza and Spenserian sonnet are especially notable. Let us examine his contribution as a poet under the following headings:

8.2.4 Spenserian Stanza

Edmund Spenser invented the Spenserian stanza and used it in his *The Faerie Queene*. The stanza consists of eight lines of iambic pentameter followed by a single alexandrine, a twelve-syllable iambic line. The final line typically has a caesura, or break, after the first three feet. The rhyme scheme of these lines is "ababbcbcc". A perfect example of the form is found the first stanza of book I of *The Faerie Queene*:

A gentle knight was pricking on the plaine,

Ycladd in mightie armes and silver shielde,

Wherein old dints of deepe woundes did remaine,

The cruell markes of many a bloody fielde;

Yet armes till that time did he never wield:

His angry steede did chide his foaming bitt,

As much disdayning to the curbe to yield:

Full jolly knight he seemed, and faire did sitt,

As one for knightly jousts and fierce encounters fitt.

Critics note several earlier stanza forms as the basis for the Spenserian stanza. One widely cited source is the ottava rima. This is an Italian form that originated in thirteenth century religious and minstrel poetry and consists of eight lines of iambic pentameter with the rhyme scheme "ababababcc." A relatively modern use of the ottava rima can be found in Byron's *Don Juan*. Another possible source for Spenser's stanza is the "rhyme royal," a stanza of seven lines of iambic pentameter that rhymes "ababbcc." Chaucer invented this in his "*Complaint unto Pity*" and Shakespeare later used it in *The Rape of Lucrece*. But regardless of its sources, the Spenserian stanza is regarded as "one of the most remarkably original metric innovations in the history of English verse". The Spenserian stanza fell into a period of disuse in the seventeenth century, but it saw a revival with Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Keats' "*The Eve of St. Agnes*," and Shelley's "*The Revolt of Islam*" and "*Adonais*." Shelley is perhaps the greatest exponent of the Spenserian stanza after Spenser himself. Following this revival in the period of English Romanticism, the Spenserian stanza petered out again in the mid-nineteenth century. A twentieth-century example of the Spenserian stanza is in the "*Dieper Levensinkijk*" by Dutch poet Willem Kloos; this is a rare example of the form written in a language other than English.

8.2.5 Spenserian Sonnet

As the name suggests, the Spenserian sonnet is named after Edmund Spenser .The Spenserian sonnet inherited the tradition of the declamatory couplet of Wyatt/Surrey. However, Spenser makes use of the Sicilian quatrains to develop a metaphor, conflict, idea or question logically, with the declamatory couplet resolving it. The Spenserian sonnet form was created by Edmund Spenser in the 1590s for Amoretti and used by few other poets, is a variation on the Shakespearean sonnet. The Spenserian sonnet has the following characteristics:

Three quatrains (groups of four lines) rhyming ababbcbc cdcd (interlocking rhymes)

One couplet (pair of lines) rhyming ee

Main shift in content (meaning), as in rhyme scheme (form, structure), usually comes right after line 12.

In addition to the general features of sonnets, the Spenserian sonnet is also marked with the following characteristics:

A quatrain made up of 3 Sicilian quatrains (4 lines alternating rhyme) and ending in a rhyming couplet

Metric, primarily iambic pentameter.

Rhymed, rhyme scheme abab bcbc cdcd ee.

Composed with a Volta (a nonphysical gap) or pivot (a shifting or tilting of the main line of thought) sometime after the II quatrain. The epiphany is arrived at logically.

Written with each quatrain developing a metaphor, conflict, idea or question, and the end declamatory couplet providing the resolution.

Spenser gave to the poets, not only of his own age, but of all ages, a high and noble conception of their calling. Together with Plato, Ovid, and Horace he believed that the poet was a creator like God, and so shared some of his immortality. The poet should work with faith and devotion because he was sure to be rewarded with immortal fame. Spenser's services to English style, diction and versification are innumerable. He demonstrated that the English language was as capable of subtlety and emotion as any that boasted of their magnificence. In his age the English language and grammar was still in a flux and as Renwick points out, 'He treated the English language as if it belonged to him and not he to it'. He coined new words, imported many from France and Italy, and saved many an obsolete word from oblivion. In order to further increase the vocabulary, he used terms of hunting and hawking, of seamanship, of art, of archery, of armory, and of law and philosophy. He made English language very flexible, effective and forceful. He interchanged parts of speech, made one word do the service of another, freely dropped prepositions and thus imparted to the English language a rare flexibility and beauty. He is truly the poet-maker, one who inspired others to achieve greatness in the field.

8.3 ABOUT THE AUTHOR (SIR PHILIP SIDNEY)

Sir Philip Sidney, the ideal gentleman, the Sir Calidore of Spenser's *"Legend of Courtesy"*, is vastly more famous as a man than as a writer. He was the chief of an elegant literary coterie, and exercised an influence which was almost supreme during his short life. He was the most commanding literary figure

before the prime of Spenser and Shakespeare. He was one of the finest poets of the English Renaissance and a pioneer of the sonnet form and English love poetry. At the time Sidney started writing; English literature had not achieved the eminence, it was to reach before the end of the sixteenth century. Often compared to William Shakespeare, he is considered one of the most important poets of the Elizabethan era (1558-1603). He wrote 108 love sonnets, an intricate prose piece featuring pastoral romance, and a passionate defense of the genre of poetry, among other works. Ever the 16th-century gentleman, Sidney forbade his poetry from being published before his death and was more well-known during his lifetime as a courtier and soldier than as a poet.

8.3.1 Life and Works

Sir Philip Sidney was born on November 30th 1554, at Renhurst, Kent. He did not think of himself as a writer in the conventional sense. He had an obvious passion for politics and foreign policy, one that proved evident in his continued involvement with Queen Elizabeth and her court. Born to Sir Henry Sidney and Mary nee Dudley, Sir Philip Sidney had a privileged upbringing. Though he was not himself a nobleman, Sidney came from a family full of influential people; his father was a "thrice lord deputy" in Ireland and his mother's family has close ties to the Queen. Sidney was also the grandson of the Duke of Northumberland, the nephew of Robert Dudley (Earl of Leicester) and the Godson of Philip II of Spain. At the age of 10, Sir Philip Sidney attended the Shrewsbury School, where he was deemed "very bright". There he met a boy named Fulke Greville, who became his lifelong friend. Sidney eventually went on to study at Oxford but never obtained his degree. After leaving Oxford, Sidney sought a more hands-on type of education which he obtained by traveling throughout Europe. During his travels, Sidney encountered several influential people and experienced the St. Bartholomew's Massacre, a slaughtering of Protestant followers. It was at Oxford that he came into direct association with eminent scholars like Edward Dyer, Richard Hakluyt, William Camden and Fulke Greville. After leaving Oxford, Philip Sidney travelled for around four years in Europe. He returned to England in 1575 and became a member of Elizabeth's court and in 1578 wrote a masque, *The Lady of May*, in her honour. He also went on diplomatic missions to Europe. After a little exile he was made the Member of Parliament and was knighted in 1582. He never forgot his youthful infatuation for Penelope Dovereux who was married to Lord Rich. Sidney's earnest and passionate love was rendered in his sonnet sequence *Astrophel and Stella*. In 1585, Sidney was appointed governor of the Dutch town of Flushing. He fought in a battle against the Spanish at Zutphen where he was mortally wounded and died after twenty six days in1586. He was buried at St. Paul's Cathedral in London on February 16, 1587. The news of his death was received in England with great

dismay and several elegies were written as a tribute among which the most memorable is Spencer's *Astrophel.*

As a prolific writer Philip Sidney was popularly known for his works like *Arcadia, Astrophel and Stella* and *An Apology for Poetry.* In criticism his *An Apology for Poetry* is a monumental work which defended poetry against the Puritan attackers.

The Lady of May

The Lady of May is one of Sidney's lesser known works and is a masque that was written and performed for Queen Elizabeth I in 1578 or 1579. The play draws upon the literary tradition of pastoral.

Astrophel and Stella

Astrophel and Stella, also known as Astrophel and Stella, is thought to have been composed in the early 1580s and was the first of the famous English sonnet sequences. They were not published properly until 1598 and were well-circulated in manuscript before this. *Astrophel and Stella* contains 108 sonnets and 11 songs and, in them, Sidney partly nativised the key features of his Italian model Petrarch, including variation of emotion from poem to poem, the philosophical trappings of the poet in relation to love and desire, and musings on the art of poetic creation.

The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia

Also known simply as Arcadia, The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia is a long prose pastoral romance, which Sidney most likely composed when he was absent from the court for a year in 1579. It is his most ambitious and famous work. Sidney finished one version of his text, and then later significantly expanded and revised his work. Scholars today often refer to these two major versions as the Old Arcadia and the New Arcadia. The work contains a highly idealised version of the shepherd's life adjoined with stories of jousts, political treachery, kidnappings, battles, and rapes. Sidney died before finishing the final revision of Arcadia. It went on to influence many famous writers, including William Shakespeare, John Day and James Shirley, and Samuel Richardson.

An Apology for Poetry

An Apology for Poetry, also known as A Defence of Poesie and The Defence of Poetry, is a work of literary criticism that is generally believed to be at least partly motivated by Stephen Gosson, a former playwright who dedicated his attack on the English stage, The School of Abuse, to Sidney in 1579. Sidney wrote An Apology for Poetry in approximately 1580 and was first published in 1595, after his

death. The essence of his defence is that poetry, by combining the liveliness of history with the ethical focus of philosophy, is more effective than either history or philosophy in rousing its readers to virtue. While it reflects Sidney's Protestantism, it is also clearly influenced by his travel and worldly intelligence.

The Sidney Psalms

The Sidney Psalms are a paraphrase of the Psalms into English verse. They were written by both Sidney and his sister Mary, and Mary completed them after his death and later presented a copy to Queen Elizabeth I in 1599.

8.3.2 Sidney's conception of poetry

Poetry, according to Sidney, "in the noblest nations and languages that are known, have been the first light given to ignorance, and first nurse whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledge's." The first plea advanced by Philip Sidney for the recognition of poetry is based on its antiquity, its universality, and the high esteem in which it had been held from the earliest times. The earliest Greek philosophers and historian had been really poets. "Let learned Greece in any of her manifolds sciences be able to show me one book before Nusaeus, Homer and He said, all three nothing else but poets.

Discussing the nature of poetry first he treats poetry in general and then it's different forms. Discussing the general he includes apparently all imaginative literature whether written in prose or verse. Dealing with the qualities of a poet he says, " that is not rhyming or versing that maketh a poet as a long gown does not make a man an advocate, but is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by." There is an element of inconsistencies in his view here. At another place he says that, "the exquisite observing of the number and measure of a word did seem to have divine force in it." He was following Aristotle and most of the Italian critics in denying verse to be the essential element in poetry. In practice however he believed that verse, if not the essence, was at least a necessary and inseparable element of poetry, and it is significant that when he deals with contemporary poetry, he confines his attention to the composition in verse. Poetry in his view is essentially an art of imitation but by imitation Philip Sidney implies something more than mere copying or a reproduction of the facts of life. He has described the poet as maker and therefore he either transmutes the real, or attempts an entirely new creation. The poet, "lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect into another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or quiet anew, forms such as never were in nature." Thus poetic imitation is an exercise of the

creative faculty. Poets have created a world which is better and more beautiful that this real world of nature. He writes in lyrical strain that "Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as diverse poets have done, neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely, her world is more brazen, the poets only deliver a golden." In other words it is more than mere illusion. The created world is the ideal world. The post in his flight, he explains, "ranges into the divine consideration of what may be and should be." Here Sidney follows Aristotle. According to Philip Sidney the poet treats solely of things as they ought to be and according to Aristotle the poet's material consists of "things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things as they ought to be". Apart from this both agree that in poetry we find something more than mere representation of real life, and that it expresses truth of the highest kind.

According to Sidney there are several kinds of poetry. He adopts the traditional classification of religious, philosophical and poetry which deals with the imaginative treatment of human life. Among the philosophical poets Sidney notes David, Soloman, Moses and Deboraih in their hymns. Among the classical poets he notes, Orpheus, Amphion and Homer. Among the Philosophical poets he notes Tyrteus, Phoclydes, Cato, lucretius, Malinius, Pontalenius, Lucan and others. Then he takes up the third kind of poets, who imitate to teach and delight, and calls them the right poets. These may be subdivided into many other kinds - heroic, lyric, tragic, comic, satiric, iambic, elegiac, pastoral and certain others. This classification is based partly on the subject matter, and partly on the metrical considerations.

Superiority of Poetry over History and philosophy

As the end of all knowledge is the teaching of virtues, Philip Sidney examines how far philosophy and history contribute to it. He admits that both philosophy and history play their parts in the teaching of virtue. Philosophy does it by precepts. It teaches us the nature of virtue by means of analysis and definition and by bringing about its general categories and specific results. The method of history is quite different from that of philosophy. Philosophy teaches virtue by precept, history does it by example. A historian does not give us a theoretical analysis of virtues but he takes concrete examples of virtuous men from the past ages, and in this way illustrates to us what virtue really is. But there are defects in both these methods. Philosophy and History both work in a different way and therefore both lack the good points of the other. The philosopher dealing with abstract rules and precepts can only be understood properly by old persons who are already learned. He cannot guide the youths, because they will not be able to understand him properly. The historian on the other hand, is so tied to the particular truth of things and not the general reason of things, that his example draweth no necessary consequence, and therefore less fruitful doctrines. Poetry is superior to both philosophy and history because it combines the function of

both. The poet takes up the abstract rules and universal truths or philosophy, and illustrates them by vivid and concrete examples in the manner of the Historian.

It may be said that images and pictures of poetry are only fictitious and imaginary therefore less important than the characters of history which are real. Sidney gives a reply to this notion also by taking the help of Aristotle. Poetry, he says deals with the universal consideration and history with the particular. The world represented by poetry is an ideal and perfect world, a world more intelligible than the world of experience. Poetry deals with what ought to be and therefore transcends nature without contradicting her. Now we can say that poetry represents virtue in a way which is intelligible to everybody. The poet is indeed the right philosopher. Sidney also discusses the diction and style of contemporary poetry and finds it in worse condition. The writers aimed at eloquence, appareled or rather disguised, in a courtesan like painted affection, they tried to write in an affected and grandiose style and used "so far-fetched words, that they may seem monsters and thus strangers to poor Englishmen." The reason of this practice he attributes to the earlier rhetorical studies, and the writer's craze to imitate the classical style. But the right way of acquiring such a style is not to keep up note books and make use of the words and phrases used by them, but to understand the spirit and methods of the great classics, "by devouring them whole, and make them wholly theirs." By trying to cast sugar and spice upon every dish that is served to the table, the writers might obtain a seeming fineness, but they could not persuade the readers which was the true end of their writings.

8.4 ABOUT THE AUTHOR (BEN JONSON)

Ben Jonson was an English playwright, poet, and literary critic of the Renaissance era. He was a prominent figure in the literary and dramatic circles of his time and made significant contributions to English literature. He was known for his wit, satirical talents, and his role in the development of English drama. Ben Jonson is among the greatest writers and theorists of English Literature. A prolific Elizabethan dramatist and a man of letters highly learned in the classics, he profoundly influenced the coming Augustan age through his emphasis on the precepts of Horace, Aristotle, and other early thinkers. While he is now remembered primarily for his satirical comedies, he also distinguished himself as a poet, preeminent writer of masques, erudite defender of his work, and the originator of English literary criticism.

8.4.1 Life and Works

Benjamin Jonson was born around June 11, 1572, in Westminster, England, shortly after the death of his father. His father had been a minister who claimed descent from the Scottish gentry, and had been

imprisoned and suffered forfeiture under Queen Mary. Two years after his birth, Jonson's mother married a bricklayer, and Jonson went to school in St Martin's Lane. Despite the fact that the family was poor, Jonson received a good education after a family friend paid for his studies at Westminster school. Following this, Jonson was going to attend the University of Cambridge, but unwillingly had to leave to work with his stepfather as a bricklayer. Perhaps his stepfather put him on to his own profession and with this, his stepfather thought, ended his parental responsibility towards the stepson. Following his work as a bricklayer, Jonson travelled to the Netherlands and volunteered to soldier with the English regiments of Francis Vere (1560–1609) in Flanders. A story has been told that Jonson fought and killed an enemy soldier in single combat, and took for trophies the weapons of the vanquished soldier.

In 1594, Jonson married Anne Lewis. They married at the church of St Magnus-the-Martyr, near London Bridge. While the marriage was unhappy, the couple had several children. St. Martin's Church registers indicate that Mary Jonson, their eldest daughter, died in November 1593, at six months of age. Then a decade later, in 1603, Benjamin Jonson, their eldest son, died of Bubonic plague when he was seven years old. 32 years later, a second son, also named Benjamin Jonson, died in 1635. In that period, Ann Lewis and Ben Jonson lived separate lives for five years.

By 1597 he came to be connected with the stage. He became an actor and a 'play jobber.' He served as an actor under Henslowe's management. He was imprisoned for associating himself with *The Isle of Dogs* but was released in October. A year later, Jonson was again briefly imprisoned, this time in Newgate Prison, for killing Gabriel Spenser in a duel on 22 September 1598 in Hogsden Field. He narrowly escaped the gallows by claiming benefit of clergy (meaning he was shown leniency for proving that he was literate and educated). While he was incarcerated, Jonson converted to Catholicism. It is well known by now that Jonson acted in many plays, including Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, some of his own plays, and some of Shakespeare's. In Kyd's tragedy, he played the role of Hieronimo. This shows that as actor he had some standing in the theatre world of London, just as Shakespeare had a standing of his own in that world. There has come out clear evidence over the years of Jonson's affiliation with the theatre. From the year 1597 onwards, this affiliation had been continuous.

Clearly, Jonson was a comic genius and a classical scholar. His comedies are superb both in terms of wit and humour as well as in terms of classical architectonic. He observes with ease the principle of three unities recommended for drama by the first law given in literature by the Greek writer, Aristotle. Jonson also observes with an equal ease the principle of decorum, making his language appropriate for his various characters. As for wit and humour, no other contemporary of his could excel him in the exhibition of wit and creation of humour. Of course, his humour is generally satirical, for his moral purpose always

accompanied his wit and humour. He did try his hand at tragedy as did most of his contemporaries. But unlike most of his contemporaries, he did not achieve much success in the production of tragedy. His attempt to make addition to *The Spanish Tragedy*, a *Richard Crookback*, and then *Sejanus* met with very little success on the stage. Even as literature, they do not compare in any manner with the high quality of his comedies. After the accession of James I to the throne of England (Queen Elizabeth died in 1603 to be succeeded by James I) Jonson collaborated with Inigo Jones for many years for writing the masques, which were very popular in the age of Jonson. Out of the total number of thirty seven masques, produced at the court of James I, Jonson alone wrote twenty. After the reign of James I, which ended in 1625, Jonson continued writing masques for five more years. It was during this very period, too, that Jonson wrote his famous comedies, although there remained no dearth of distractions and troubles at home and abroad. One of the problems Jonson faced during this period was fresh chances of landing in the prison the third time. As a distraction came a tour of Europe which Jonson had to undertake as a tutor of the son of Sir Walter Raleigh. Despite all these problems, however, he was able to produce his famous comedies, namely, *Volpone, or The Fox (1606), Epicoene, or The Silent Woman (1609), The Alchemist (1610)*, and *Bartholomew Fair (1614)*. He did write a tragedy also, namely *Catiline, His Consperacy (1611)*, which, like his other tragedies, was not a success. Obviously, the fact that Jonson succeeded only as a writer of comedy and masque shows that he had no genius for other forms of drama. That is why, whenever he acted against his grain and attempted dramatic forms other than masque and comedy he invariably met with failure. Jonson, being more worldly-wise in practical matters than Shakespeare, got his collected works published in Folio form in 1616, whereas Shakespeare's plays were put together in the Folio form seven years after his death in 1616. In the case of Shakespeare, the Folio edition of his plays was prepared by two actor-friends of the dramatist. In 1616, Jonson was the first dramatist who felt, or acknowledged, a feeling that dramatic productions were important enough to justify formal preservations. Incidentally, the death of Shakespeare in 1616 also marked the end of Jonson's great period as a dramatist. Whatever plays he attempted after 1616 were a miserable failure. He was not successful like Shakespeare, who wrote superbly until his last play *The Tempest*. Nor was Jonson a versatile genius like Shakespeare who wrote comedies, tragedies, tragicomedies, histories, romances, etc., all the different forms of drama. His range, therefore, compared to that of Shakespeare, remains rather narrow, confined only to classical comedy and masque. Jonson's life and opinions did not, however, end in 1616. He went on foot to Scotland in 1618, where he visited his famous contemporary poet, William Drummond of Howthornden. The two famous men of letters, thus, got opportunity to exchange notes on life and literature. This resulted in the publication of the notes of their conversation, done by Drummond, which have been considered a valuable source of information for the material on Jonson's life and on literature. Jonson's attainments as

poet and dramatist earned him an M.A. degree, which Oxford University offered him in 1619, as a recognition of his contribution to English drama and poetry. Jonson was also awarded a pension by the king of England. Thus, he became, in effect, the first poet laureate of England, although without a formal title given to him. Around the same time, Jonson received recognition from his younger contemporaries as the main arbiter of poetry. He came to be surrounded by a group of admirers and followers, who came to be known as the "Tribe of Ben." These poets of younger generation, largely from Scotland, liked to be called the "Sons of Ben." Jonson's fame was also followed by bunch of misfortunes. In 1623, a fire destroyed his entire library, including his own works in progress. Among many precious writings, his notes for a poetical treatment of his trip to Scotland were also destroyed by the fire. Also included in this lot were Jonson's manuscript of an English grammar. Only a rough draft of the said grammar remained. His enthusiastic patron, James I, died in 1625, leaving Jonson less important. In 1628, he suffered a paralytic stroke, which left him almost an invalid. The plays he produced during this unfortunate period of the 1620's met with very little success. His only valuable work of this period is, for sure, his notes and comments on reading, preserved in a volume called *Timber, or Discoveries*. In 1637, Jonson died and was buried in Westminster Abbey – a place reserved for honouring the poets and other important persons.

Ben Jonson occupies by common consent the second place among English dramatists of the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I. He was a man of contraries. For "twelve years a papist," he was also—in fact though not in title - Protestant England's first poet laureate. His major comedies express a strong distaste for the world in which he lived and a delight in exposing its follies and vices. A gifted lyric poet, he wrote two of his most successful plays entirely in prose, an unusual mode of composition in his time. Though often an angry and stubborn man, no one had more disciples than he. He was easily the most learned dramatist of his time, and he was also a master of theatrical plot, language, and characterisation. It is generally said that Jonson entered the English theatre like a plague and was considered, for quite some time, an affliction. The first play with which his name was associated was *The Isle of Dogs (1597)*, which is a lost comedy. It was written by him in collaboration with Thomas Nashe – one of the group of dramatists known as University Wits. Since the comedy was so pungently satirical, it outraged the authorities, and to such an extent that they ordered the closure of all theatres. Not only that, they also imprisoned Jonson and the other actors in the Marshalsea, which lasted for four months, from July to October 1597. At this stage of his dramatic career, Jonson was both actor and writer. By 1598, Jonson had written another comedy named *The Case Is Altered*, which was comparable to Chapman's *All Fools*. To this period also belongs the original form of *A Tale of a Tub*. It is now extant only in its revised form done much later than the time of its original composition. Jonson's fame as dramatist actually began with the first play by him which the Chamberlain's company acted. The play was named *Every Man in His*

Humour. It is now widely agreed that Shakespeare himself acted a part in the play when it was produced sometime in September 1598. Jonson's play became an instant success of its day. As the text then stood, it looked another superficial Italian comedy, set in Florence. It was concerned with the classical devices of the duel of wits between father and son and the stratagems of an intriguing slave. But behind the superficial Italian plot there could be seen a keen analysis of contemporary English life. This subtext, so to say, of the play came into greater prominence when later Jonson revised the play for his Folio of 1616. He gave the play's characters English names and also introduced a vast apparatus of pungent London allusions. *Every Man in His Humour* was staged at the Globe theatre in 1599. Incidentally, it is at this very theatre that most of Shakespeare's plays were staged and of which Shakespeare was a shareholder. Jonson became so proud of his success that he got the play published the very next year (1600). He published it with a signed dedication to the gentlemen of the Inns of Court, considered arbiters of elegance of Jonson's day.

Elated by the success of his dramatic method, Jonson pressed the same technique for greater bite of satire in his next play, *Every Man Out of His Humour (1599)*. In this play, there is no such thing as a dramatic plot. It only consists of dramatic episodes and acute psychological generalisations. The characters still have the Italian names, but they are no longer living in Italy. They are shown inhabitants of the "Fortunate Island," which in the apparent language of irony is none other than England.

Jonson's next comedy was Cynthia's Revels (1600), which he sold to the boys of the Queen's Chapel. Compared to his first success, it is a rather slighter piece. But in terms of satire, the play is even more aggressive than the earlier ones. In a number of other ways, this new play also adumbrates the later dramatic development of the author. Unlike the earlier plays, it ends in an authentic masque.

His next satirical comedy was *Poetaster (1601)*.It begins with Envy (an allegorical figure) hopefully rising "to damn the author." But the mailed prologue of the play Poetaster treads it underfoot. Although not one of the greatest comedies of Jonson, Poetaster is, for sure, one of the most amusing. The scene is set in Rome in the reign of King Augustus (that is first century A.D) with the chief poets of the age as its leading characters. There are also the patrons as well as enemies of these poets. Jonson himself becomes Horace, the great law-giver of 15 literature, and praises him profusely. Marston is presented as poetaster in the person of Cripinus. Perhaps clear from the thinly veiled allegorical characters, those satirized in Jonson's play took to their pens as quickly as Jonson had done earlier and wrote counter-attacks on the author of Poetaster. Maybe, Jonson himself gave out the names of his would-be victims in his play, Dekker, one of these victims, had a play ready for counterattack about the same time Jonson's *Poetaster*

reached the stage. Dekker's play, entitled *Satiromastix, or the Untrusting of the Humorous Poet,* appeared simultaneously both at the Globe and at Paul's.

His next composition was *Sejanus (1603).*It is a historical drama of ponderous ethics and meticulous scholarship. Seeing some merit in the play, Chapman, as well as Marston, wrote complementary verses for the first quarto that came out in 1605. It is felt by some critics that Chapman may have had a hand in the composition of the stage version of *Sejanus*. It was this play, after *Every Man in His Humour* that Shakespeare's company chose to stage. The company later also acted Jonson's Roman tragedy of *Catiline his Conspiracy (1611)*. Even though he was on the verge of retirement as an actor, Shakespeare himself performed a part in *Sejanus*. Now the war of the theaters had ended. Two things seem quite clear here from Shakespeare's conduct during this period. One that he was above the usual level of mutual bickering in which his fellow-dramatists frequently indulged. Second, that the fact Shakespeare chose to stage Jonson's plays, although not all of them, shows that he did see merit in his younger colleague and advanced whatever encouragement he could to help him to do well as a dramatist.

His next creation was *Volpone or the Fox (1605).*This dreadful comedy takes place in modern Venice. The play's theme of greed comes from Jonson's study of the enormities of ancient Rome. Jonson once again uses here his usual allegorical method of making his characters represent different humours. He further intensifies it by adopting the method of the beast fable. By representing his characters as animals, Jonson is able to caricature the human types into ludicrous figures. Here, the chief villain among the characters is called the Fox. His agent is the Fly (Mosca). His dupes are the birds of prey, namely crow, vulture, and raven. Although the technical perfection of the play is a little marred by the induction of a sub-plot, its human appeal is a good deal increased. This sub-plot concerns three characters from England now placed in Italy. Jonson does establish a link between the sub-plot and the main-plot, but it remains a tangential link, leaving the two rather unintegrated. Considered critical opinion has favoured *Volpone* as the finest of Jonson's plays, although Dryden gave the palm to his next composition.

The next play of Jonson, *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman (1609)* is as much closer to farce as Volpone is to tragedy. Both these plays are so well organised and so much life-like that either of them would have assured Jonson's place as the greatest satirical dramatist England has ever produced. But even these two are surpassed by Jonson's next play, *The Alchemist,* which has been considered the crown of his career as dramatist. This last was produced in 1610, making in tonal terms the exact centre of the two. It has perfect economy of construction. As has been aptly remarked, in this play every word and gesture counts in the final effect. Here, the fusion could go no further. The place is not only London; it is only a part of London, the fashionable Blackfriars quarter where Jonson himself lived. It was from this very place that

he had signed the dedication of *Volpone*. The entire action remains restricted to the Lovewit's house – mostly inside the house, partly outside at its door. The time of the play's action is the year of the plague (1610), which was raging the city as Jonson wrote. The total time taken by the action is only as much as the actual time the actors have to remain on the stage. All the characters are motivated to act by a single spring, the desire to grab something in return for nothing. Three of the total of twelve characters are rogues, seven are dupes, representing five classes of people that could be seen any time at Blackfriars. The precision that Jonson had achieved in *The Alchemist* could not be repeated without its growing stale. In that sense, his later comedies are surely inferior to what he had achieved in this and the two other comedies preceding it.

He produced two very important plays: *Bartholomew Fayre* in 1614 and *The Staple of News* in 1625. The former is, in fact, the complement of *The Alchemist*, which presents a picture of the other side of London. Here, on this side of Paradise, so to say, the lower classes congregate at Smithfield during the famous August fair. Compared to *The Alchemist*, it takes a larger canvas and many more characters, but Jonson finds much the same people there and much the same vices. The characterisation and satirisation are as brilliant as in the best of his comedies. What makes it inferior to Jonson's very best is the lack of neatness in its structure. The other of the later plays, *The Staple of News*, ridicules the impostures of the new business of journalism. Here, the scenes of satire are as brilliant as anywhere. Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass (1616)* and *The New Inn (1629)* are, surely, on a lower plane, but they do have greater romantic charm than any other play Jonson had written since *The Case Is Altered*. As Jonson grew older and sadder, and his classic certitude relaxed, in some ways he became more Elizabethan. His best expression of this side of his dramatic art can be seen in the beautiful fragment of pastoral drama that he left uncompleted, The Sad Shepherd. Thus, Jonson completed his dramatic journey from the classical chastity of form, through the gay abandon of the masques, to the romantic comedies of the Elizabethan kind.

8.5 OTHER IMPORTANT WRITERS

Apart from the above mentioned writers there were several other writers who contributed to a great extent to enhance the British literary treasure. Their works have all the magnificence and grandeur of a great literary text, yet they are less read and known to present literary world.

8.5.1 George Gascoigne

George Gascoigne (1525-1577) English poet George Gascoigne was born around 1535 in Bedfordshire. He part of the Elizabethan court for a while, thought largely unsuccessful, and was a soldier who fought in the Low Countries of Belgium and France including the Middleburg Siege of 1572. Gascoigne was the

first ever poet to portray Queen Elizabeth as a deity. She is shown by him as virgin goddess who rules over England. His most notable work is *A Discourse of the Adventures of Master FJ*. Further, George Gascoigne has introduced many writing forms to English literature through his works. His other works are *The Steele Glas* (1576), a poem written in blank verse and Jocasta (1566), a tragedy which is a landmark in the growth of drama.

8.5.2 George Chapman

George Chapman (1559?-1634). Chapman was born at Hitchin in Hertfordshire. Chapman spent his long, quiet life among the dramatists, and wrote chiefly for the stage. His plays, which were for the most part merely poems in dialogue, fell far below the high dramatic standard of his time and are now almost unread. His major works include: *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* (1596), *All Fools* (1605), *Eastward Ho!* (1605), *Bussy D'Ambois* (1607). His most famous work is the metrical translation of the *Iliad (1611)* and of the *Odyssey (1614)*. Chapman's *Homer*, though lacking the simplicity and dignity of the original, has a force and rapidity of movement which makes it superior in many respects to Pope's more familiar translation. Chapman is remembered also as the finisher of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, in which, apart from the drama, the Renaissance movement is seen at perhaps its highest point in English poetry. Out of scores of long poems of the period, *Hero and Leander* and the *Faery Queen* are the only two which are even slightly known to modern readers.

8.5.3 Michael Drayton

Michael Drayton (1563-1631). Drayton is the most voluminous and, to antiquarians at least, the most interesting of the minor poets. He is the Layamon of the Elizabethan Age, and vastly more scholarly than his predecessor. He was born in Warwickshire. His chief work is *Poly-olbion* (1612), an enormous poem of many thousand couplets, describing the towns, mountains, and rivers of Britain, with the interesting legends connected with each. It is an extremely valuable work and represents a lifetime of study and research. Two other long works are *The Barons' Wars* (1603) and the *Englands Heroicall Epistles* (1597); and besides these were many minor poems. One of the best of these is *The Battle of Agincourt* (1627), a ballad written in the lively meter which Tennyson used with some variations in the *"Charge of the Light Brigade,"* and which shows the old English love of brave deeds and of the songs that stir a people's heart in memory of noble ancestors.

8.5.4 Thomas Heywood

Thomas Heywood (1575 – 1641).Thomas Heywood has contributed to both Elizabethan literature and Jacobean literature. He is said to have involvement in over two hundred plays and he has authored more than twenty plays. Heywood is known for his domestic comedy where normal families suffer a tragedy because of high passions and lust. Charles Lamb describes Thomas Heywood as "prose Shakespeare". Heywood is well known for his works *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603), *The English Traveller* (1633) and *The Pleasant Comedy* (1634).

8.5.5 John Webster

Webster was born in London sometime around 1580 (16 years after Shakespeare), the son of a carriage maker and a blacksmith's daughter. Brought up in the parish of St. Sepulchre, Newgate, his father was a prominent member of the Guild of Merchant Taylors, with Webster probably attending the Merchant Taylors' School. To his credit he has two tragedies noteworthy: *The White Devil* (1609-12) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613-14).

8.6 LET'S US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed about the life and works of Spenser and his poetic style along with his contribution as a poet. Then we discussed about the life and works of two notable writers Sidney and Ben Jonson. We have discussed some notable factors regarding the creations of these two writers, e.g. Sidney's conception of poetry. Further we have gone through some other important writers as Gascoigne, Chapman, Drayton, Heywood and John Webster. After the discussion we have known some main points about these writers and their important works.

8.7 GLOSSARY

Glimpse – a very quick and incomplete view of something, somebody.

Patronage – the support given to an organization or person.

Platonic – a relationship that is purely spiritual and physical.

Aesthetic – concerned with beauty or art.

Surmount – to overcome successfully with a problem or difficulty.

Archaic – very old-fashioned; no longer in use.

Extensive – large in amount or area.

Fascinating – extremely interesting or charming.

Architectonic – the scientific study of architecture.

Poetaster – a person who writes inferior poetry.

8.8 QUESTIONS

1- Estimate Edmund Spenser as a poet of sonnets.

2- Discuss about the poetic style of Spenser.

3- Examine Spenser's contribution as a poet.

4- Briefly analyse the life and works of Sir Philip Sidney.

5- Analyse Sidney's conception of poetry.

6- What was Sidney famous for?

7- What is the writing style of Sidney?

8 - What are some interesting facts about Ben Jonson?

9 - Why was Ben Jonson so famous?

10 - What are the achievements of Ben Jonson as a dramatist?

8.9 FURTHER READING

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MAEN - 108 N

Major Trends and Movements in English Literature -I

उत्तर प्रदेश राजर्षि टण्डन मुक्त विश्वविद्यालय, प्रयागराज

BLOCK III- JACOBEAN AND PURITAN AGE

INTRODUCTION TO BLOCK III

Dear learners! This block is aimed at making you aware about Jacobean and Puritan Age. This block is divided into four units from 9th to 12th. Unit ninth focuses on Jacobean Drama. In this unit, we will learn about the growth and development of Jacobean drama in English literature. The tenth unit aimed to discuss metaphysical poet, cavalier and Caroline poets. *The unit deals* Metaphysical poets who were a group of writers who wrote poems that were witty, intellectual, and highly philosophical, and often used strange imagery and metaphysical conceits to make their points. It also deals Caroline and Cavalier poets. The 11th unit focuses on Francis Bacon and other prose writers. The 12th and last unit of the block focuses on Puritan Movement and poets. It deals the Puritanism or Protestant movement that began in England in the 17th century to reform the Church of England. During this time, some of the most well-known poets were Puritans. In short, after studying this block, you will be able to understand the philosophical and realist way of thinking about English literary movements and develop the analytical power to understand mythological plays and their narrative technique dramatized by him.

UNIT 9 JACOBEAN DRAMA

Structure

9.0 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this unit is to offer a brief information on:

- Jacobean drama
- the features of Jacobean drama.
- the major themes that were discussed by the playwrights in their dramas.

- major playwrights of the Jacobean Age.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, have you ever wondered what the term 'Jacobean' means? Well, let me tell you! 'Jacobean' actually comes from the Latin form of James, which is 'Jacobus'. This period in history is named after James I, who was a prolific writer. He even wrote four books, including works on poetry, demonology, and even a famous piece called *A Counterblast to Tobacco* (1604). So interesting, right? Do you want to know what kind of dramas were being performed during the reign of King James I? Well, concentrate now, because what I am about to say is important. The era of Jacobean drama was born during his time. This type of drama is an amazing reflection of the society that existed back then. But wait, there's more! Before this era, there was the Elizabethan Age, which was quite successful in its own, right! Are you excited to dive into the world of historical drama and discover the fascinating stories that lay hidden within? Let's go then!

Here are some of the important points that you should remember about Jacobean drama:

1. The influence of Shakespeare and Marlowe can be seen in the dramas of this age.

2. The audience desired a more realistic picture of the society.

3. Major themes of Jacobean drama were representation of city life, political themes,

corruption, and licentious spirit. Other common themes were sickness, death, family crisis, dishonesty, cruelty, exploitation, etc.

4. One of the dominant themes was sexuality and sexual relations.

5. Two types of dramatic genres were dominant in the Jacobean drama. On the one hand, Shakespeare flourished comic drama in the Elizabethan Age, and Ben Jonson led harsh satire.

6. Sensationalism and excessive emotions can be seen in the characters of the dramas of this age. Therefore, the dramas written were Melodramas.

7. Some playwrights also focused on politeness as they were nostalgic about the world's decencies.

9.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

If you want to really get into the world of Jacobean drama, it's crucial to dive into the fascinating historical background of the Jacobean age. Trust me, understanding the context of this era will totally enrich your experience of the plays and make them come alive like never before! In the Jacobean Age, the society saw uncertainty and social and political unrest because of the attack on the House of Parliament on November 5th, 1605.

The society at the time, England, followed the hierarchical societal order. The different classes were like a pyramid on which the top was occupied by the members of the aristo class, under which the royal court came, then landowners and at the middle, there were middle-class people like tradesmen and merchants, and at the bottom were lower class people like servant, everyday workers. People believed in religion, and the Church of England reigned supreme. The religion which was followed at that time was Anglican. It was the time when people believed in witchcraft and black magic. People widely believed in superstitions. Even the king witnessed witchcraft and wrote a tract on this entitled *Daemonologie* in 1597. R. Sundra Raju said, "The mood and the tone of Jacobean drama were to a great extent influenced by the political situation in England during the first quarter of the seventeenth Century. The glamour of the spacious times of Queen Elizabeth was over nearly a decade before the great Queen's death ended. A nervous feeling of political uncertainty and a vague apprehension of a possible civil war over succession gradually took the place of joyous contentment in the people's minds" (qtd in studco.com).

The preceding age of the Jacobean age was the Elizabethan age. Shakespeare's greatest tragedies were the most popular genre of Elizabethan literature. In the Jacobean age, many themes were carried over. Shakespeare's greatest tragedies were written between about 1601-1607. The playwrights were writing comedy and tragedy. Another feature of drama which flourished at this time was masque. Jonson and Inigo Jones have raised it to a literary peak in their works. It was extravagant courtly entertainment. Let us examine the features of Jacobean drama.

9.3 FEATURES OF JACOBEAN DRAMA

Some key features of Jacobean drama are as follows:

1. **Dark and Tragic Themes**: Jacobean plays often explore dark and tragic themes, delving into the complexities of human nature, corruption, revenge, and the consequences of power. The tone is generally more sombre and intense compared to Elizabethan drama.

2. Moral Ambiguity: Characters in Jacobean drama are morally complex and often exhibit shades of grey rather than clear-cut distinctions between good and evil. This moral ambiguity adds depth and realism to the characters.

3. Violence and Bloodshed: Jacobean plays are known for their explicit depictions of violence and Bloodshed. The works of playwrights like John Webster (*The Duchess of Malfi*) often feature gruesome and sensational scenes, reflecting a fascination with the macabre.

4. Political Intrigue: Given the political unrest during the Jacobean era, many plays of this period involve political intrigue, conspiracies, and power struggles. Playwrights explored the darker aspects of courtly life and political machinations.

5. Complex characters: Characters in Jacobean drama are psychologically complex, with motivations that are not always straightforward. These characters often grapple with inner conflicts, and personal desires and external pressures drive their actions.

6. Pessimism and Melancholy: Jacobean drama has a prevailing sense of pessimism and melancholy. The works often depict a world filled with decay, moral corruption, and disillusionment.

7. Supernatural Elements: Jacobean plays frequently incorporate supernatural elements, drawing inspiration from the popular beliefs of the time. Ghosts, witches, and other supernatural occurrences add a layer of mystery and intrigue to the plots.

8. Senecan Tragedy Influences: Jacobean playwrights were influenced by Senecan tragedy, characterised by its emphasis on revenge, violence, and a fatalistic worldview. This influence is evident in the structure and themes of many Jacobean tragedies.

9. Symbolism and Allegory: Symbolism and allegory are commonly employed in Jacobean drama to convey deeper meanings. Objects, events, and characters may carry symbolic significance, adding layers of interpretation to the plays.

10. Social Critique: Jacobean drama often serves as a platform for social critique. Playwrights use their works to comment on the corruption and moral decay they perceived in society, reflecting the times.

11.Versatility in Genres: The Jacobean era saw many dramatic genres, including tragedies, comedies, and tragicomedies. Playwrights experimented with different forms and styles to cater to diverse audience preferences.

These characteristics collectively contribute to Jacobean drama's unique and often intense nature, reflecting the era's tumultuous historical and cultural context.

9.4 MAJOR THEMES OF JACOBEAN DRAMA

Jacobean drama, which encompasses the theatrical productions during the reign of James I of England (1603-1625), featured diverse themes that reflected the social, political, and cultural dynamics of the time. Some major themes in Jacobean drama include:

Revenge and Tragedy: Many Jacobean plays, both tragedies and tragicomedies, explored themes of revenge. Characters sought vengeance for real or perceived wrongs, leading to intricate and often violent plots. Example: John Webster's *The White Devil*.

Political Intrigue and Power Struggles: The Jacobean period was marked by political instability and court intrigue. Consequently, plays often depicted the Machiavellian politics of the time. John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* is a notable example with its portrayal of political corruption and power struggles.

Corruption and Decay: Jacobean drama frequently depicted a world in moral decay. The plays showcased corrupt rulers, deceitful characters, and a declining society. This theme is evident in works like Ben Jonson's *Volpone* and Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*.

Domestic Tragedy: Some plays focused on the tragedies within families and domestic settings. Themes of jealousy, betrayal, and the abuse of power were common. Example: John Ford's *Tis Pity She's a Whore*.

Love and Sexuality: While tragic elements dominated Jacobean drama, themes of love and sexuality were also explored. The treatment of these themes often included complex relationships, illicit affairs, and the consequences of forbidden love. John Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* and Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* touch upon these themes.

Social Critique: Jacobean playwrights often used drama to critique societal norms and values. Satirical elements were incorporated to comment on the vices and follies of contemporary society. Ben Jonson's city comedies, such as *Volpone* and The Alchemist, are notable examples of social critique.

Supernatural and Occult: The Jacobean period saw an interest in the supernatural, reflected in some plays. Themes of witchcraft, ghosts, and the supernatural were woven into the plots.

Complex Characters: Jacobean drama is characterised by complex, multi-dimensional characters. These characters often grappled with internal conflicts and moral ambiguities. Exploring human psychology and the darker aspects of human nature were prominent features in plays like John Webster's works.

Ambiguity and Irony: Many Jacobean plays featured elements of ambiguity and irony. Ambiguous morality, unexpected twists, and ironic resolutions were used to engage and challenge the audience. John Webster's plays, especially *The Duchess of Malfi*, are known for their ironic and ambiguous elements.

These themes collectively contributed to the richness and complexity of Jacobean drama, making it a fascinating and reflective body of work that captured the uncertainties and complexities of the Jacobean era.

9.5 MAJOR PLAYWRIGHTS OF THE JACOBEAN AGE

Learners! Did you know that during the Jacobean era, playwrights were divided into two main categories? It's pretty interesting. Isn't it? They were the traditionalists and the satirists. This division is noteworthy as it highlights the diversity of literary styles and genres that emerged during this period. While the traditionalists adhered to conventional theatrical practices, the satirists sought to challenge and subvert these established norms. This duality of approaches underscores the dynamic and innovative nature of Jacobean drama.

9.5.1 Ben Jonson (1572-1637)

Ben Jonson was born on June 11th 1572, in London. His father was a clergyman, and he died before Ben Jonson's birth. His mother remarried to Robert Brett. He tried to revive Elizabethan drama, particularly comedy. He is generally considered as the second most notable English playwright of the James I era, following in the footsteps of William Shakespeare. He appeared at that time when University Wits were establishing themselves through their romantic drama. During that time, he started his career as an actor and playwright. In 1598, the Lord Chamberlain's theatrical company successfully performed Johnson's Every Man in His Humour. In this way, his reputation was established. Johnson endeavoured to infuse the spirit and style of Latin comedy into the renowned English stage through the creation of the current play. This play shows the story of a young man with an eye for a girl with a phlegmatic father. She is dependent on a clever servant. Jonson has shown four characters- Choler, melancholy, phlegm and blood which were thought to determine human physical and mental makeup. In 1599, his other play, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, came, which was more impressive. Jonson was known for his deep appreciation of classical literature, particularly Roman playwrights like Seneca and the comedic traditions of Plautus and

Terence. He sought to bring a more classical structure and discipline to English drama, emphasising unity of action and adhering to the classical rules of drama.

Jonson was a comedy master primarily known for his city comedies, which satirised his time's social and moral issues. Ben Jonson has originated a new kind of comedy drama. *Volpone* (1606) and *The Alchemist* (1610) are two of his most famous comedies. These plays often featured sharp wit, intricate plots, and complex characters.

In addition to his plays, Jonson was a prolific writer of masques. Masques were elaborate court entertainments that combined poetry, music, dance, and visual spectacle. Jonson wrote numerous masques for the court of James I, showcasing his skill in creating extravagant and artistic performances. Jonson and Shakespeare, whose works were more prevalent during their time, had a professional and personal relationship. Jonson's plays were appreciated for their intellectual depth and craftsmanship. Jonson's attitude toward Shakespeare and his contemporaries is perhaps best captured in his "Discoveries", where he praised Shakespeare and critiqued certain aspects of his writing. In 1616, Jonson was appointed as the Poet Laureate of England. His literary legacy includes his plays, masques, poetry, and critical writings. His impact on English drama extended beyond his time, influencing later playwrights and writers.

Overall, Ben Jonson's contribution to Jacobean drama lies in his innovative approach to comedy, incorporation of classical influences, and exploration of social and moral issues through satire. His works continue to be studied and performed, showcasing the enduring significance of his contributions to English literature.

9.5.2 Francis Beaumont (1584-1616)

Francis Beaumont and his collaborator John Fletcher were significant Jacobean dramatists known for their contributions to English Renaissance drama. Beaumont was born around 1584 or 1585. He is considered the funniest dramatist of the Elizabethan era. He collaborated with John Fletcher on comedies and tragedies. The two writers have started writing drama perhaps in the year 1608. They worked together for around eight years. Together, they produced a series of successful plays that were performed at the Globe Theatre, including tragicomedies and comedies. Plays like *The Maides Tragedy*, *Phylaster* (c. 1609), and *A King and No King*, *The Maid's Tragedy* (c. 1611) are included in this collaboration. Beaumont and Fletcher's collaborations covered a wide range of dramatic genres, from tragicomedies to city comedies and historical plays. This diversity showcased their ability to adapt to different styles and cater to the tastes of the Jacobean audience.

While Beaumont is often remembered for his collaborations, he also wrote plays independently. One of his known solo works is *The Woman Hater* (c. 1606), a comedy exploring love and marriage themes, The Knight of the Burning Pestle and Don Quixote. Beaumont's contributions to the comedies often featured humour and wit. His comedies, such as *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (c. 1607), exhibited a keen sense of satire and a playful exploration of theatrical conventions. While Beaumont is perhaps more famous for his collaborations in comedy, he also contributed to tragedies. *The Maid's Tragedy* is a dark and intense tragedy that explores themes of love, betrayal, and revenge.

Beaumont married Ursula Isley, and it seems that after his marriage, he retired from the theatre. His last surviving drama is *The Masque of Gray's Inn* and *The Inner Temple*. These were written for the wedding of James I's daughter, Elizabeth, in February 1613. Beaumont tragically died at the age of 32. Despite his brief time as a playwright, his collaborative efforts with Fletcher left a lasting mark on the theatrical landscape of the Jacobean era. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* writes about his writing genius and expressively presents his writing style as "deeper, sweeter and nobler" than the style of his great friend John Fletcher.

Beaumont's works significantly impacted later playwrights, including those of the Restoration period. His style, characterised by clever dialogue and intricate plots, influenced the development of English drama beyond the Jacobean era. Francis Beaumont's legacy as a Jacobean dramatist is closely tied to his collaborative work with John Fletcher. Together, they created famous plays in their time and continued to influence later generations of playwrights. Beaumont's contribution to the diversity of Jacobean drama, his humour, and his exploration of various genres have secured his place in the history of English Renaissance theatre.

9.5.3 John Fletcher (1579–1625)

John Fletcher emerged as the Jacobean era's most accomplished and important playwright. He was born in Rye, Sussex, in December 1579 and died in August 1625 due to plague. At the beginning of his career, Fletcher started writing in association with Beaumont. They remained inseparable until Beaumont lived. It was the most influential association of his career. Later on, he started his career as Shakespeare's apprentice. He has also collaborated with him in many of his plays. In this way, he became the principal author after Shakespeare died for Shakespeare's company, the King's Men. His plays combined light comic elements with tragedy and are considered among the most influential writers of seventeenth-century drama. He was known for his tragic comedies.

Fletcher is best known for his collaboration with Francis Beaumont. Together, they wrote a series of successful plays that were performed at the Globe Theatre. Their joint works include tragicomedies like *Philaster* (c. 1609) and *The Maid's Tragedy* (c. 1611), *A King and No King* and *The Scorn Lady*. Notably, approximately 40 plays were performed in the King's Company between 1615 and 1642, which Beaumont and Fletcher wrote. The plays like *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Henry VIII* were both staged around 1613. He also collaborated with Philip Massinger. In addition to his collaborative efforts with Beaumont, Fletcher wrote numerous plays independently. Later, the tragic comedy genre became the most popular form of the Jacobean era. Some of his works include tragicomedies like *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608) and comedies like *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* (1624). Fletcher demonstrated versatility in writing various dramatic genres, including tragicomedies, comedies, and tragic plays. His ability to adapt to different styles and genres allowed him to cater to the diverse tastes of the Jacobean audience.

Fletcher's career gained prominence in the post-Shakespearean period. After Shakespeare died in 1616, Fletcher collaborated with other playwrights and continued to write plays independently. He became the principal playwright for the King's Men, the theatrical company to which Shakespeare had belonged. After Beaumont died in 1616, Fletcher continued to write plays independently and collaborated with other playwrights. He maintained the stylistic elements of the Beaumont and Fletcher partnership, including witty dialogue, complex plots, and exploration of human emotions.

Fletcher's collaborative and solo works had a lasting impact on later generations of playwrights. His influence can be seen in the works of Restoration dramatists, and his plays were frequently adapted and performed during the 17th Century. Fletcher's plays often included romantic and sentimental elements, exploring love, loyalty, and honour themes. His tragicomedies, in particular, blended elements of tragedy and comedy, reflecting the tastes of the Jacobean audience. Fletcher continued to be a prolific playwright until he died in 1625. His career spanned a period of political and social upheaval in England, including the reigns of James I and Charles I. John Fletcher's legacy as a Jacobean dramatist is significant, both in collaboration with Francis Beaumont and in his solo works. His plays contributed to the rich tapestry of English Renaissance drama, and his influence extended well beyond the Jacobean era.

9.5.4 John Webster (c. 1580 – c. 1634)

John Webster is another name who was one of the most famous dramatists of Jacobean drama. His birth and death dates are unknown. However, he was associated with the age of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603) and that of James I (1603-1625). Although Webster was born in the Elizabethan age, his literary career

began and ended during the period when James I was ruling over England. John Webster is famous for his comedies, but he is best known for his two-major works, The White Devil (1612) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614). Critics have said that Webster's tragedies are often criticised for being excessively grey and horrifying.

After a deep analysis of Webster's plays, it can be said that they show a world in chaos that is ruled by intense sensuality. The world he has presented in his plays seems full of immorality and lacks human feeling. Despite this, his plays had a unique charm that is present in the verse. These verses often iambuses dignity and power. He wrote most of his plays in blank verse, which was not blank verse but unrhymed iambic pentameter lines, which were irregular.

9.5.5 Phillip Massinger (1583–1640)

Massinger is the well-known playwright of the Jacobean Age. He is known for his comedies, art of plot construction, social realism, and satirical power. He was born in 1583 in Salisbury, England, and died in 1639/40 in London. By 1613, he worked as a junior partner and co-authored with playwrights like Philip Henslowe, Thomas Dekker, and John Fletcher as a playwright. Later on, he started his independent productions as well. Massinger has also revised John Fletcher's plays like The King's Men. Although not as successful as Fletcher, he remained associated with producing plays with a high moral tone and philosophic character. He was associated with some 53 plays in writing or had his hand in his 30-year career. The earliest original plays and collaborations were associated with the King's Men. It is the same company in which Shakespeare had been a member and a writer. Later on, Massinger succeeded Shakespeare in 1626.

Massinger's plays often involve morally complex situations and characters. The moral dilemma the character's face contributes to the depth and richness of the drama, aligning with the characteristic moral ambiguity of Jacobean plays. Massinger frequently explores themes related to power, corruption, and political intrigue. His plays, such as *The Roman Actor* and *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, engage with the abuse of authority and the consequences of political machinations. Massinger, like other Jacobean dramatists, delves into tragedy and dark themes. His works often involve themes of revenge, betrayal, and the destructive nature of unchecked ambition.

Massinger, influenced by Senecan tragedy like his contemporaries, incorporates elements such as revenge, violence, and moral ambiguity into his plays. The influence of Seneca is particularly noticeable in the structure and tone of his tragedies. His plays often feature satirical elements that critique societal

norms and behaviours. This satirical approach is a characteristic feature of Jacobean drama, which frequently comments on the vices and follies of society.

Massinger creates psychologically complex characters with intricate motivations. The characters in his plays are not one-dimensional but rather reflect the moral and psychological complexity inherent in the Jacobean tradition. Like other Jacobean playwrights, Massinger experimented with various dramatic genres. His works include tragedies, comedies, and tragicomedies, showcasing versatility in storytelling and catering to diverse audience preferences. His plays often explore social issues of his time. Whether addressing political corruption, the abuse of power, or economic disparity, his works provide a lens through which to examine the socio-political concerns of the Jacobean era.

Massinger collaborated with other playwrights, such as John Fletcher. Collaborative efforts were joint in the Jacobean era, and Massinger's willingness to work with others reflects the collaborative spirit of the time. Philip Massinger's contributions to Jacobean drama include his exploration of moral complexity, engagement with political and social issues, and skilful crafting of psychologically nuanced characters. His works add to the rich tapestry of drama from the Jacobean period. He died in 1640 and was buried in Fletcher's grave in Southwark Cathedral. Some of the significant romances of Massinger are *The Duke of Milan* (1620), *The Duke of Florence* (1627), and *The Roman Actor* (1626). Apart from this, he has also written some comedies like *The City Madam* (1632) and *The Guardian* (1633) and tragic comedies like *The Bondman* (1623) and *The Renegado* (1624).

9.5.6 John Ford (1586–1639)

John Ford (1586–c. 1639) was an English playwright of the Jacobean era, and he is considered one of the prominent Jacobean dramatists. His works, particularly his tragedies, exhibit typical characteristics of Jacobean drama. Before starting writing, Ford practised law. He wrote a few plays that went unpublished later on. Although he wrote a few plays, he is still considered one of the most important tragedians of the Jacobean Age.

His themes were compelling but blurred by subplots, which feature minor characters and lousy comedy. His characters are tragically frustrated and are the victims of circumstances. The power of his writings is in the use of blank verse. He wrote in fairly strict iambic pentameter. His unique ability was in expressing the feelings of the heart, the depth of his language, and the depth of both romantic and the heart's agony. He was interested in abnormal storylines like incest in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*.

He collaborated with several well-known dramatists in writing a famous play, *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621-22). His career as a dramatist started in 1628, and for the next decade, he earned his name as a playwright. His three plays were acted, and he also produced plays which helped him earn a place among the top playwrights of the era. After that, no record of his works was found. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1911) says that John Ford suffered from "a delusion that he was possessed of abundant comic humour". Unfortunately, his plays were ignored by the publishers for two centuries until they were rescued in the 19th Century. As Shakespeare was famous at the beginning of the era, Ford was active near the end. Ford's works often contain elements of social critique, reflecting the concerns and anxieties of the Jacobean society. Whether exploring personal passions or political intrigue, his plays offer insights into the broader socio-cultural context.

In short, John Ford's contributions to the Jacobean drama are marked by his exploration of dark and complex themes, morally ambiguous characters, and poetic style. His works capture the spirit of the Jacobean era and contribute to the rich tapestry of dramatic literature from that period.

9.5.7 James Shirley (1596–166)

Shirley was born in 1596 in London, England. He was educated at Merchant Taylor's School, London, and completed his BA in 1618 from St Catharine's College, Cambridge. He was an English poet, dramatist and one of the leading playwrights of the Jacobean era. It was the time known for the parliament ban of theatre in 1642. Just a few years before this incident, Shirley started writing. He wrote his first poem, Echo or The Unfortunate Lovers and was published in 1618. About 1624, he moved to London and started writing plays. His first play was *Love Tricks*, which he wrote while teaching at St Alban's, and the first play, *The School of Compliment*, performed in 1625 at the Phoenix, Drury Lane. in 18 years. Queen Henrietta's Men was the theatre company where most of his plays were performed.

He became a playwright and gained distinction both in tragedies and comedies. His first play, *The School of Complement*, was performed at the Phoenix, Drury Lane, in 1625. When the theatres closed in 1636 as a precaution against the further spread of the plague, Shirley became a playwright for St. Werburgh's Theatre in Dublin. He returned to London in 1640, following Philip Massinger as playwright for the King's Men at Blackfriars Theatre. After the English Civil War (1642–51), he returned to teaching and published two Latin grammars and some non-dramatic verses and allusions. Famous tragedies of Shirley: *The Traitor, The Cardinal*. Both are tragedies of Bloodshed and Horror; among the best comedies, The Welding and The Changes foreshadow the Restoration comedy of manners. His comedies are more famous as they painted the society, manners, and fashions. He skilfully captures the lifestyle of the

prosperous social classes of his era, showcasing exceptional talent in illustrating these scenes. His writing is distinguished by its graceful and elegant style.

9.6   LET'S US SUM UP

Throughout this unit, we have delved into the rich and fascinating history of Jacobean drama, exploring its origins, development, and significant contributions to the theatrical canon. We have examined the artistic, cultural, and social contexts that shaped this genre, and analyzed its distinctive features, themes, and styles. The development of Jacobean drama marks a fascinating and tumultuous period in the history of English theatre. The transition from the Elizabethan era to the Jacobean era brought about significant shifts in thematic content and theatrical conventions. Jacobean drama, characterized by its dark and complex exploration of human nature, political intrigue, and moral ambiguity, showcased the evolving socio-political landscape of the early 17th century.

Prominent playwrights such as John Webster, Ben Jonson, Francis Beaumont, and John Ford contributed to the richness of Jacobean drama, offering audiences a stark departure from the more optimistic and romantic themes prevalent in the preceding Elizabethan plays. The plays of this era delved into the darker aspects of human psychology, presenting intricate character studies and exploring the consequences of unchecked ambition, revenge, and political corruption.

The influence of classical sources, coupled with a heightened awareness of the transient nature of power and morality, shaped the thematic landscape of Jacobean drama. The plays grappled with the complexities of a society in flux, mirroring the uncertainties and challenges of the Jacobean period. The political and social climate, marked by the reigns of James I and Charles I, further permeated the narratives, contributing to the emergence of tragic plots and the examination of power dynamics.

The censorship imposed by the Master of the Revels added an additional layer of complexity to the playwrights' creative endeavours, prompting them to employ subtlety, symbolism, and clever language to convey their messages. Despite these challenges, Jacobean playwrights demonstrated resilience and innovation in navigating the constraints, resulting in a body of work that continues to captivate audiences and scholars alike.

The legacy of Jacobean drama extends beyond its historical context, influencing later periods of English literature and theatre. The exploration of psychological depth, moral ambiguity, and the complexities of the human condition in Jacobean plays laid the groundwork for subsequent playwrights and dramatic traditions. The enduring impact of these works serves as a testament to the enduring power of Jacobean

drama to engage and provoke thought, offering a window into a pivotal moment in the evolution of English theatre.

9.7 QUESTIONS

What do you mean by the term Jacobean?

What are the important characteristics of Jacobean drama?

Who were the famous dramatists of this era?

Explore the role of tragedy in Jacobean drama. What themes and motifs are commonly found in tragic plays of this era?

How did the political and social climate of the Jacobean period influence the themes and content of the dramas produced during this time?

Discuss the influence of classical sources, such as Greek and Roman literature, on Jacobean drama. How did these influences manifest in terms of themes, characters, and structure?

What is the contribution of the Jacobean dramatists in the development of Jacobean drama?

Explore the role of tragedy in Jacobean drama. What themes and motifs are commonly found in tragic plays of this era?

9.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 10 METAPHYSICAL POETS, CAVALIER AND CAROLINE POETS

10.0 OBJECTIVES

Dear Learners! The main aim of this unit is to provide a brief introduction to Metaphysical poetry, its characteristics, and poets. By the end of this reading, you'll be able to impress your friends with your newfound knowledge of Metaphysical poetry and what makes it so special!

- The origin and meaning of the term "metaphysical".
- What metaphysical poetry is, its place in the history of British literature, and the poets associated with it.
- The significant characteristics of Metaphysical poetry.
- Major and minor poets of metaphysical poetry.
- What the metaphysical conceit is.

So, let's dive in and explore the world of Metaphysical poetry together!

10.1 INTRODUCTION OF METAPHYSICAL POETRY

Learners! Would you like to learn about Metaphysical Poetry? It's a fascinating genre of poetry that combines intellectual and spiritual themes. Let me give you a quick introduction to it!

10.1.1 Meaning of the term 'Metaphysical'

I know that you curious about the definition of the word 'metaphysical'. Let us start with the meaning of the term 'Metaphysical'. To learn about metaphysical poetry, it's important to understand what metaphysics means. So, let's start by discussing what this term actually refers to, shall we? Once we have a good understanding of metaphysics, we can then dive into the world of Metaphysical poetry!

Metaphysics is made from two words: Meta and Physics. Literally, "Meta" means 'beyond', and "Physics" means 'physical nature'. So, the term metaphysical means 'beyond physical nature'. What does it mean? It means that metaphysical poetry talks about beyond the physical nature. Again, a question arises: What comes beyond the physical nature? Can you guess? Yes, of course, it studies the principles of nature, the creation of the universe, man's place in it, the concept of God and man's relationship with Him. If I talk about who is the poet who helped in establishing this type of poetry. So, he was John Donne, who is considered as the founder of the so-called Metaphysical.

10.1.2 Origin of the term 'Metaphysical'

So, learners! I just wanted to remind you about something. Do you happen to remember the question we had earlier regarding the origin of a word? Now we have the word "metaphysics". This word is derived from the Greek phrase "meta ta phusika", a title attributed by Andronicus of Rhodes around the year A.D. 70. This title became associated with a collection of Aristotelian treatises known as the "Metaphysics".

Now, you might be wondering who first used the word metaphysical. So, the answer is that it was Dryden who first used the word 'metaphysical' in connection with Donne's poetry and wrote "Donne affects the metaphysics". Dr Johnson confirmed Dryden's judgement in his book Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets (1779). However, it was in negative sense. Ever since the word "Metaphysical" was used for John Donne and his followers, the term 'metaphysical' has referred to a traditional method of arguing popularised by a group of philosophers called the Scholastics. Metaphysical poetry delves into the comprehensive human experience, emphasising the profound insights and earnestness of the poets. This genre mainly explores profound realms of experience, focusing on themes such as love, both in romantic and religious contexts.

10.1.3 Metaphysical poets

So now the next term we have is -Metaphysical poets: The term "Metaphysical poets" refers to a diverse, insightful group of 17th-century English poets recognised for their clever incorporation of intellectual and theological ideas into their poetry. Their distinctive style is characterised by creative conceits, perplexing paradoxes, and imaginative imagery that often stretches the boundaries of convention. The leader of this school is John Donne. The other leading poets are George Herbert, Richard Crawshaw, Henry Vaughan, Abraham Cowley.

10.1.4 Metaphysical Poetry

Let's take a moment to focus on our final term, Metaphysical poetry. Let's keep the conversation going! by exploring what leading thinkers have said about metaphysical poetry. Grierson has compared metaphysical poetry with Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Goethe's *Faust* and said that metaphysical poetry "has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence". Metaphysical poetry broke all the tradition and created a new style of writing poetry. They are known for conceits and metaphors. According to Saints Bury, metaphysical refers to "the habit, common to this school of poets, of always seeking to express something after, something behind, the simple, obvious first sense and suggestion of a subject". Hence, it can be said that Donne and his followers wrote varied poetry as compared to Spenser and the Spenserians. Metaphysical poetry holds a distinctive position in the timeline of English poetic history. It emerged during the post-Shakespearean period, extending through the Miltonic era and persisting until the early stages of the Restoration Era. The poetry of the metaphysical poets is marked by distinct characteristics that set it apart from the work of their predecessors.

The Metaphysical poets endured a period of diminished critical appreciation throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, as the Romantic poets of that era found little resonance with the heavily intellectualised nature of their poetry. However, at the close of the 19th century and the onset of the Twentieth century, there was a resurgence of interest in this poetic movement. T.S. Eliot played a crucial role in this revival, notably with his influential essay "The Metaphysical Poets".

The Twentieth century witnessed a zenith in fascination, particularly during the era of the New Critics School around the mid-century. Scholars and critics enthusiastically delved into the intricate facets of Metaphysical poetry, appreciating its intellectual depth and linguistic innovation. While the intensity of interest has faded somewhat recently, a sustained curiosity remains about the Metaphysical poets.

The term metaphysical is dominantly associated with John Donne, who belongs to the Seventeenth Century. The major British poets of the Seventeenth Century who popularised metaphysical poetry were John Donne, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, Richard Crawshaw, Henry Vaughan, Abraham Cowley, Thomas Treherne, John Cleveland, Richard Leigh and Edward Benlowes. Before metaphysical poetry, the prevalent kind of poetry was similar in theme as the poets copied each other. It lacked emotion and was artificial. So, there was a need for change. John Donne brought this change with his poetry. John Donne is the most popular name who broke the Petrarchan tradition of highly sentimental and idealised poetry, which had little to do with reality.

image source: https://ektajayswal12.blogspot.com/2017/11/assignment-of-metaphysical-poetry.html
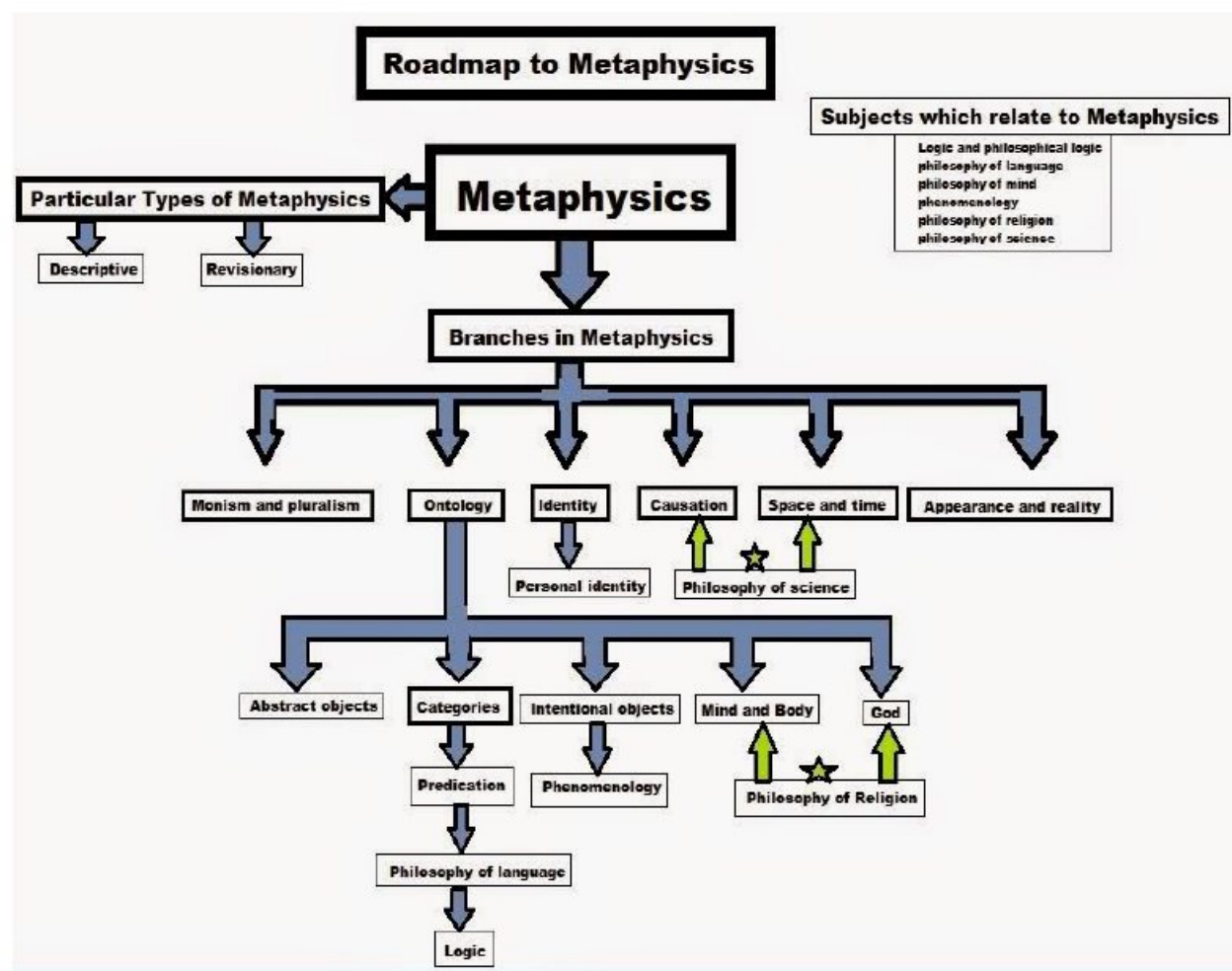
10.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF METAPHYSICAL POETRY

Highly intellectual and emotional: Metaphysical poetry is highly intellectual and emotional. metaphysical poetry is considered highly intellectual due to its intricate and thoughtful exploration of abstract concepts, but it is equally emotional as it delves into the complexities of human experience and emotion. The

combination of intellectual depth and emotional resonance is a distinctive feature of this poetic movement.

Exploration of profound and abstract questions: Metaphysical poetry is known for its exploration of profound and abstract questions, often delving into complex and metaphysical themes. The poets associated with this movement, such as John Donne, George Herbert, and Andrew Marvell, posed questions that went beyond the conventional and addressed fundamental aspects of existence, love, spirituality, and the nature of reality.

For example: Questions about the Nature of Reality: Donne's poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" raises metaphysical questions about the nature of separation and connection, using the metaphor of a compass to explore the bond between two lovers.

"If they be two, they are two so / As stiff twin compasses are two."

Questions about Divine Intervention:

Donne's "Batter my heart, three-person'd God" raises questions about the transformative power of God and the desire for divine intervention.

"Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you / As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend."

Physical intimacy: Metaphysical poetry is where a poet keeps from describing physical intimacy. Did you know that John Donne, the famous English poet, rarely wrote about the physical beauty of any woman in his poems? It's interesting to note how Donne's poetry often delves into complex philosophical and spiritual themes, rather than the conventional themes of love and beauty. Did you know that there's a fascinating fact about John Donne's poetry? It's interesting to note that in most of his poems, Donne rarely talks about the physical beauty of any woman. Quite surprising, right? Instead, he talks about platonic love, spiritual things, and philosophical topics.

Realism: Traditional poetry was about fairy tales, but metaphysical poetry was entirely realistic. The poets took the images from the society.

Mixture of wit and seriousness and full of imagery: Metaphysical poetry is known for its use of wit and seriousness. It deals with profound questions such as the nature of God and the limits of human perception. This combination of intellectual depth and playful language makes these poems both thought-provoking and enjoyable to read. Wit allowed the poets to approach complex topics in a way that was accessible to everyone. The use of simple, direct language and short sentences made their work easy to

understand. By focusing on the use of everyday language, metaphysical poetry was able to explore important philosophical questions without sacrificing clarity.

Poetry often uses imagery to convey its themes and messages. "The Good Morrow", for example, uses the concept of discovery to express the idea of two lovers awakening to a new understanding of each other. The poem employs literary devices, such as repetition, paradox, and assonance, to emphasize this point. In "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning", the speaker urges his lover not to be sad about his departure, using elaborate comparisons and imagery. The image of moving planets reminds the reader that there are bigger, less troubling events. Meanwhile, natural phenomena, like flooding and storms, associated with sadness and grief, magnify the sorrow of parting. Imagery in poetry offers insight into its themes. For instance, "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" uses the imagery of a compass to describe the strong bond between two lovers. In contrast, "The Good-Morrow" focuses on the exploration of two lovers and their lack of concern of losing sight of each other.

Use of Metaphors: The metaphors used were strange, artificial, and called 'conceits'. Conceit is an extended metaphor—a comparison of unlikely things. Example: In John Donne's "Flea", Donne addresses his beloved, trying to convince her to engage in a physical relationship with him. The flea becomes a central metaphor for their union. Donne argues that the flea has bitten both of them, mingling their blood within its body, creating a physical connection. Here, the flea serves as a conceit to explore the idea that their union is as innocent and natural as the mingling of their blood within the insect.

Religious sentiments and human love/ sensuality: Often, the combination of the two can be seen in metaphysical poems. Donne's poetry is the perfect example. For instance, in John Donne's poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning", he uses the metaphor of a compass to describe the connection between two lovers. The compass represents the spiritual connection that transcends physical distance, much like the transcendent bond between the soul and God.

Metaphysical poets explored the tension between sacred and profane love. George Herbert, a notable metaphysical poet, in his poem "The Collar", expresses a struggle between his desire for earthly pleasures and his commitment to God. The poem reflects a conflict between the immediate gratification of worldly desires and the spiritual fulfillment derived from religious devotion. These poems were highly ambiguous due to the metaphysical poets' high intellect and knowledge.

The language is colloquial: The poet used everyday speech. The poets used language as if they were scientists or shopkeepers. Therefore, one can find the prosaic and unpoetic words in these poems.

Poetic Devices: The use of various poetic devices, such as paradoxes, harsh satire, allusions, and ambiguity, is common in metaphysical poetry. These devices add layers of meaning and contribute to the sophisticated nature of the language. Metaphysical poetry always perceives similarities between dissimilar, and they excessively use figures of speech.

10.3 THEMES OF METAPHYSICAL POETRY

The Metaphysical poets are known for their distinctive literary features, including theological exploration, witty comparisons, paradoxes, and complex questions about existence. Their poetry often delves into profound religious themes, utilizing clever and imaginative comparisons to express abstract concepts. Including paradoxes, where seemingly contradictory ideas coexist, is a hallmark of their intellectual approach. Additionally, Metaphysical poets are renowned for posing intricate and thought-provoking questions about the nature of existence, pushing the boundaries of conventional poetic expression with their innovative and challenging explorations.

10.4 METAPHYSICAL POETS

10.4.1 John Donne (1572-1631)

One of the most famous poets of this period is John Donne. John Donne was born in 1572 in London, England and died in 1631. His father, John Donne, was an iron-monger. He died when young Donne was only four years old. At 12, he matriculated at the University of Oxford, where he studied for three years. Then, he continued his education at the University of Cambridge, but he did not take any degree either from Oxford or from Cambridge. He received a Doctor of Divinity from Cambridge at the King's command.

John Donne was the most important literary figure and the most influential preacher of Seventeenth-century literature. Though he belonged to Elizabethan in time, he had nothing of that spirit. He broke away from established Elizabethan traditions and revolted against the established Elizabethan poetry. 160 of Donne's sermons have survived in print form. Only one volume of his poetry, *Anniversaries* (1611, 1612), was printed during his lifetime. What distinguishes his poetry from Elizabethan is the use of conceit and metaphysical wit. He used colloquial language in his poetry. He discarded mere romantic elements and added subtlety and learning. Donne is also significant for the nautical images in his work, after Shakespeare. He uses too many conceits in his poems. His metaphors are farfetched; therefore, comprehensive knowledge is required to understand them.

Donne also wrote various poems- poems, elegies, satires and religious poems. His poems are an amalgamation of curiosity, ambiguity, obscurity and wit. He brought the far-fetched ideas together. The main feature of John Donne's poetry is wit. He was considered the monarch of wit by Leishman in his book The Monarch Wit. His religious poems are Petrarchan and show the terrors of Judgement Day and the speaker's meagreness, especially his *Holy Sonnets*. The language of his religious poems is idiomatic, exclamatory and very dramatic. The chief elements of Donne's poetry are love, faith and sentiment. The significant images that Donne has used to convey lovers' emotions in his poems are the images of zoology, geography, astronomy and the seasons. For example, "The Good Morrow", "Love's Alchemy", and "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning". His poems "Flea", "Canonization", and "Hymn to God, in my Sickness" are poems which have some unusual images and idiomatic, exclamatory and dramatic language.

"This flea is you and I, and this

Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is."

- "The Flea"

"The Phoenix riddle hath more wit

By us; we two being one, are it."

- "The Canonization"

104.2 George Herbert (1593–1633)

Herbert was perhaps the prominent metaphysical poet after John Donne. Herbert Followed Donne in most respects. He has been called the "saint" of the metaphysical school. His approach to God and Christ is full of what Edmund Gosse calls "intimate tenderness". The conceits and imagery he used are Donnean type. The subject of Herbert's poem was sacred. He believed that whatever a man has should be used in the service of God. By career, he was a priest, and in his short career as a priest, he wrote Temple- a collection of 150 short lyrics published in 1633. His Temple was the most famous poetry collection of the age. "Pilgrimage" is considered as the best poem of this collection. Herbert's poetry is like a gentle stream which flows smoothly. Herbert described his poetry as a picture of the many spiritual conflicts between God and the soul. His religious poems have a touch of devotion and simplicity, which is the secret of his power. He did not follow the rule of versification in his poems and used conceits like John Donne in the poem "Heaven". His use of conceits is miraculous. Many of his poems are strange and appealing to the extreme, bound by oddities of metaphor, enabling him to express many hidden and far-

reaching ideas. Sometimes, he shows sudden turns, emphatic pauses, and lightning thoughts, thrusts his words into the reader's memory, and forces them to take out the meaning from his strange and daring conceits. Herbert's poetry is a direct colloquy with God. This is the striking aspect of Herbert's poems in which he expressed his thoughts in a conversational tone of remarkable intimacy. His dialogues are noticeable as it naturally changes the tone from courtly to colloquially. It gives his verse a dramatic quality.

Herbert's significant achievement is evident in his composition of around one hundred and sixteen verses, each characterized by distinct forms. His poetry masterfully combines intellect and sensibility, exemplifying the flexible attitude associated with Materialistic wit. Notably, Herbert's use of conceit sets him apart from Donne. In contrast to Donne's reliance on images from scientific or scholastic learning, Herbert draws his conceits from everyday familiar sources. This difference in their approach to conceit enriches each poet's expression with a distinctive and unique quality. Coleridge has commented as "nothing can be more fine, manly and unaffected".

10.4.3 Richard Crawshaw (1612–49)

Originally, Anglican Crawshaw later became Catholic. He was fascinated by Spanish Mystics like Marino and composed his poems based on it. He was so much influenced by the Spanish mystics, which fanned his zeal to a flame in which his crudeness transfigured till it became his natural language of admiration. Crawshaw's poetry is spontaneous. It lacks evenness. He was quite undisciplined and was in a mood of religious enthusiasm and excitement. He used daring images and conceits in his poems. Crawshaw started writing love poems, but later on, he shifted to pure religious poems. His most famous poetical work was *The Step to the Temple* (1664), a collection of religious poems which revealed a strain of Spanish Mysticism.

Like Donne and Herbert, Crawshaw also wrote metaphysical poems, but in some ways, he was not metaphysical. It is because his poems reveal mental conflict and the complexities of the mind. The use of conceit in his writings appears to be primarily ornamental, lacking the depth found in Donne and Herbert. His intellectual range falls short of theirs, and he lacks the restraint and artistry characteristic of Herbert. In his later religious poems, there are notable outbursts of passionate and lyrical intensity, expressing fervent adoration for the acceptance of the Roman faith. His writing leaves not left any room for doubt or uneasiness of spirit, presenting a resolute and unwavering expression of religious conviction. The images present in the poem are pictorial, and the style is not colloquial, although he has used conceits, which is a

striking feature of his poetry. His poems are emotional rather than thoughtful. For example, in "The Weeper", he presents the eyes of Mary Magdalene as:

"Two walking baths; two weeping notions;

Potable and compendious oceans."

His fervent and expressive speech is remarkably compelling, and according to Grierson, his creations possess two of the outstanding qualities of exceptional lyric poetry: "intensity of emotion and musicality".

10.4.3 Andrew Marvell (1621-78)

Andrew Marvell is the sole Puritan figure among the metaphysical poets. However, unlike the typical sombre attitude associated with Puritans of his time, Marvell was characterised as a humanist, possessing wit and demonstrating his artistry as a poet. Born to a clergyman, Andrew Marvell received his education at Cambridge University. Following a period as a tutor and extensive travels, Marvell became associated with John Milton in government roles. Notably, he played a potential role in helping Milton avoid severe consequences, possibly even a death sentence, after the Restoration. Marvell initially supported King Charles I, but his allegiance shifted to Oliver Cromwell and the Commonwealth government. During the Interregnum, he served as a Member of Parliament for Hull, his hometown. Marvell wrote several poems praising Cromwell during this time. Interestingly, despite earlier works that honoured the reign of Charles I, Marvell, after the Restoration, penned pieces critical of the court of Charles II.

Andrew Marvell is recognised as a metaphysical poet, drawing parallels with John Donne by utilising metaphysical conceits—clever and intricate comparisons characteristic of this poetic style. Like Donne, Marvell's poems explore spiritual themes and the ephemeral nature of life. His most renowned work, "To His Coy Mistress," starts as a seduction poem promoting carpe diem, or "seize the day" in Latin, but it transitions into metaphysical contemplation. Beyond the theme of seduction, the poem delves into broader philosophical reflections, showcasing Marvell's adeptness in merging passion with profound thought. "To His Coy Mistress" is considered one of the finest metaphysical love poems in English literature. While it shares the passion, emotion, and tension characteristic of other love poems, these elements are filtered through intellectual reasoning and arguments, as is typical of metaphysical love poetry. Metaphysical poetry tends to be predominantly intellectual and analytical, and "To His Coy Mistress" aligns with this pattern. Throughout the poem, the emotions and feelings of the lover are expressed and controlled through intellectual means. Consider the following lines:

"At my back I always, hear

Time winged chain of hurrying near

And yonder all before us lie

Deserts of vast empty."

-"To His Coy Mistress"

10.4.4 Henry Vaughan (1622-95)

Vaughan was a follower of Herbert but had his temper. His poems are temperamentally mystic. His conceits are like Donne and Herbert. His important works are Poems (1651), Silex Scintillans (1650)-which appeared in two parts in 1650 and 1655, respectively and Thalia Rediviva (1678). Vaughan's most famous poems are published in the collection Silex Scintillans. The title of the collection is significant, which means "The Sparking Flint". The Emblematic title page engraved "a heart of struck by a thunderbolt from Heaven". Thomas O. Calhoun has said about Vaughan's Silex Scintillans, "Here in hymns and songs and longer lyric verse, Vaughan represents moments in a realisation of himself. Part by part, one straining often to reject another, some only loosely bound in place – yet in their place – an individual emerges from obscure fragments of his past through pathways of a search for love, knowledge, and peace. At the end, the man stands whole and comprehended" (Henry Vaughan). The poem "Silex Scintillans" reveals a significant evolution, bearing the influence of Herbert evident in its themes, titles, and material forms, incorporating phrases from "The Temple". Despite this influence, the poet has not merely copied Herbert; instead, he has conveyed his own emotions and ideals that required expression. The work reflects a personal and original engagement with the themes and forms inspired by Herbert's influence.

Vaughan's poems are devoted to Church festivals. Sometimes, it can be seen that he imitates Herbert's fancifulness and simplistic way of expression. His poetry is beyond that, dealing with childhood and communion with nature and eternity. He used fantasy in his poems to adore his poems. His poem "The Retreat" presents childhood thoughts and echoes Wordsworth's "Ode to Intimations of Immortality in Childhood". Like Wordsworth, he feels nature is superior, infinite and as the symbol of God. There are some lines of his poem "The World":

"I saw eternity the other night

Like a great ring of pure and endless light

All calm as it was right".

10.4.5 Thomas Treharne (1634-74)

Treherne is also an influential mystic poet like other metaphysical poets. Like Vaughan, he aroused the question of how man can regain his lost joy and later comes to the solution, like Wordsworth, that nature and God are the solution to Man's every question. He perceived keenly not only the beauty of nature but also idealised childhood. With his radiant vision of childhood, he glorified the world with magnificence and astonishment. he felt that he was speaking to God in the form of nature. He believes that one cannot understand God until we engrained ourselves to the beauty of nature.

Wyatt and Collins believe that Treherne is not metaphysical because of his poetic qualities but is closer to Vaughan in mood and subject matter. Even his prose cannot be differentiated from poetry because of the finer spiritual expressions that reach the level of poetry. He was indeed the poet who experienced the calm and joy of soul and spiritualism with the eyes of his poetry. His poem "The Wonder" portrays a child's wonder of soul and body. He is amazed at the body in which the soul resides and the world into which he was born.

10.4.6 Edward Benlowes (1603 –76)

Edward Benlowes, born on July 12, 1602, in Finchingfield, Essex, England, was an English poet associated with the metaphysical school and a generous supporter of the arts. Despite his family's Roman Catholic background, Benlowes embraced Protestantism fervently at an early age. Utilising the wealth derived from his extensive inherited estates, he dedicated himself to various artistic ventures. This included commissioning engravings to illustrate not only his own poems but also those of his friends. Moreover, he went as far as owning his own printing press.

Benlowes authored "Theophila, or Loves Sacrifice", published in 1652, during the tumultuous 1640s, which was marked by civil wars. This long poem, characterised by its sublime rhapsodic passages and extravagant conceits, intricately details the soul's journey towards mystical communion with God. However, the financial toll of the English Civil Wars and legal disputes left Benlowes in a precarious economic situation.

Consequently, he found himself financially strained during his later years. Despite these challenges, Benlowes chose to spend his declining days in Oxford. There, he immersed himself in intellectual pursuits, engaging in extensive reading at the Bodleian Library. Amidst this scholarly environment, he occasionally found inspiration to continue his poetic endeavours, demonstrating resilience and dedication

to his literary pursuits even in the face of financial adversity. Edward Benlowes died on December 18, 1676, in Oxford, Oxfordshire.

10.4.7 Abraham Cowley (1618 – 28 July 1667)

Abraham Cowley commenced his poetic endeavours at the young age of 12 and saw his poems officially published at the age of 14. By this point, he had already transitioned away from metaphysical themes. Positioned between the metaphysical poets and the Dryden school, Cowley, known for his extended verses, presented his love poems in "The Mistress" in 1647. Despite lacking brilliance and occasionally emulating others, his poetry is replete with scholarly references and is marked by discerning criticism rather than impassioned expression. He is known for the use of wit in his poems. Cowley Defines wit in his poem "Ode of Wit" as: "In a true piece of wit, all things must be, yet all things there agree".

This poem is one of his concise masterpieces, where he cleverly amusingly analyses wit. The examination of wit, presented with abundant imagery and cleverness bordering on subtlety, is intriguing. Another noteworthy poem, "Against Hope" similarly exhibits this witty quality, hovering on the edge of subtlety and peculiarity. As the era of conceits faded, wit transitioned to signify not ideas that were never considered before but rather those that were frequently contemplated but had never been articulated so eloquently. Cowley fell out of fashion. He lacked an appreciation for pleasing sounds, and his most well-crafted verses were characterised by a precise but devoid-of-melody and quality. Cowley does not have the spirit of the metaphysical, but his intellectualism is linked with classicism.

10.5 METAPHYSICAL CONCEITS

Conceit may be defined as the excessive use of over-loaded elaborated similes and metaphors drawn from the most far-fetched, remote and unfamiliar sources. Dr Johnson defines a conceit as the perfection of "Occult resemblances in things apparently unlike". Metaphysical poets employ unique literary devices, such as wit, irony, conceits, puns, and paradoxes. Their poetic style revolves around comparing seemingly unrelated things, a technique known for its distinctive duality. This use of language and imagery contributes to metaphysical poetry's intellectual and imaginative richness, distinguishing it as a genre that thrives on exploring unconventional connections and complex ideas. Throughout the history of poetry, writers have perceived similarities between dissimilar objects and utilised similes and metaphors to convey these connections. What sets metaphysical poets apart is their particular approach:

They use the figure of speech excessively

Their metaphors and similes are far-fetched and often drawn from unfamiliar sources.

Their figures are elaborated to the utmost extent.

The relationships they perceive are hidden and not immediately apparent

Their images are more logical and intellectual than sensuous and emotional.

John Donne is the poet who is known for his metaphysical conceits. Donne has linked heterogeneous objects together to establish a likeness between them. Donne's poems have highly intellectual imagery into his poems to illustrate his feelings. Donne did it deliberately, which surprised the reader. The metaphysical poets often bring together the abstract and concrete together, the far and the near, the spiritual and material, the finite and infinite, the sublime and the commonplace. John Donne draws his imagery from Modern theology, Scholastic philosophy, the Ptolemic astronomy of the middle ages, and the concepts of contemporary to another and it requires an equal agility on the part of the readers to follow him. The metaphysical poets frequently unite abstract and concrete elements, bridging the gap between the distant and the near, the spiritual and the material, the finite and the infinite, as well as the sublime and the commonplace. John Donne, for instance, incorporates imagery from modern theology, Scholastic philosophy, medieval Ptolemaic astronomy, and contemporary concepts. Understanding his work demands a reader's equal agility in navigating through these diverse influences. Johnson has said about his poetry that "yoked by violence together". Let us understand conceit by few examples of John Donne's poems.

Example of Conceit in Donne's poems:

1. *If they be two, they are two so*

    As stiff twin compasses are two,

    Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show

    To move, but doth, if the other do.

    And though it in the center sit,

    Yet when the other far doth roam,

    It leans, and hearkens after it,

    And grows erect, as that comes home.

    -"A Valediction Forbidding Mourning"

The conceit in this poem by John Donne lies in depicting two lovers as the two points of a compass, the drawing tool. In this metaphor, one lover is likened to the fixed point, while the other is compared to the point of a pen or pencil. The imagery suggests a dynamic relationship where one lover revolves around the other, and both incline towards each other, creating a symbolic representation of the interconnectedness and movement within their love.

> 2. *Mark but this flea, and mark in this,*
>
> *How little that which thou deniest me is;*
>
> *It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee,*
>
> *And in this flea our two bloods mingled be.*
>
> *Thou know'st that this cannot be said*
>
> *A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead;*
>
> *Yet this enjoys before it woo,*
>
> *And pamper'd swells with one blood made of two;*
>
> *And this, alas! is more than we would do.*
>
> -"The Flea"

In this poem, John Donne extensively addresses his beloved, centring the discussion around a flea. Initially noting that the flea has drawn blood from both of them, Donne proceeds to argue that there is no justification for her reluctance toward physical intimacy, as their blood has already intermingled within the tiny creature. Despite the apparent focus on a flea, Donne employs it as a remarkably unconventional metaphor to express his desire to be intimate with his beloved.

10.6 CAVALIER AND CAROLINE POETRY

10.6.1 Cavalier poetry

The term "Cavalier" originates from the French word "chevalier", signifying a knight or horseman. It was initially referred to a mounted horseman associated with chivalry. This designation represented a high social position, with commoners typically excluded from commanding roles in Cavalry regiments.

However, during the 17th Century, the term took on a derogatory meaning, mainly when applied to supporters of the king. These individuals were viewed as arrogant and wasteful of taxpayers' money.

Who were the Cavalier Poets?

Cavalier poets were a collective of poets aligned with the Royalist cause of King Charles I during the English Civil War (1642-1651). Active mainly in the mid-seventeenth Century, these poets championed the monarchy and conveyed their allegiance to King Charles I through their poetic works. The term 'Cavalier' poets primarily reflects their political leanings rather than specific stylistic traits or thematic concerns in their works. Most of these poets belonged to the nobility and shared a common interest in supporting the maintenance of the Divine Right of absolute monarchy. A significant outlier is Robert Herrick, who, in contrast, lacked noble lineage and worked as a clergyman.

Cavalier poetry is typically recognised for its elegant and sophisticated style, shaped by the influences of courtly and aristocratic settings. The prevalent themes in Cavalier's poetry encompass love, loyalty, honour, and the exaltation of a cultured, courtly way of life. Notable Cavalier poets who exemplify these characteristics include Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, Sir John Suckling, Richard Lovelace, Edmund Waller, John Denham, and Sir William D' Avenant. The Cavalier or Caroline poets were the followers of Ben Johnson, and some of them had the influence of John Donne as well. These poets differed from the metaphysical poets of their time, who were recognised for their intellectual and intricate style. The Cavalier poets, in contrast, emphasised conventional forms and the articulation of courtly ideals, mirroring their era's social and political circumstances.

The terms " Cavalier" and " Caroline" are often used interchangeable, and both refer to a group of poets who were active in England during the 17th Century. However, there are subtle distinctions in their usage.

Cavalier Poetry

Characteristics : "Cavalier" primarily refers to the poets who supported King Charles I during the English Civil War (1642-1651). In their works, these poets celebrated ideals of love, beauty, and loyalty to the monarchy.

Historical Context: The term "Cavalier" is more closely associated with the historical and political circumstances of the English Civil War. The poets under this label expressed royalist sentiments and often hailed from aristocratic or courtly backgrounds.

Examples: Prominent Cavalier poets include Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, Sir John Suckling, and Richard Lovelace.

10.6.2 Caroline Poetry

Characteristics: Caroline is a broader term encompassing the literary and cultural trends associated with the reign of King Charles I (1625-1649). It includes the Cavalier poets and other writers and artists of the Caroline era.

Literary Trends: Caroline literature extends beyond the royalist poetry of the Cavaliers to include various genres and themes of the period. It encompasses royalist and non-royalist works produced during King Charles I's rule.

Examples: While Cavalier poets are included in the Caroline era, other writers like John Milton, associated with Puritanism, also contributed to the literary landscape of this time.

In short, "Cavalier" is more specifically linked to the royalist poets who supported King Charles I during the English Civil War. At the same time, "Caroline" has a broader scope, encompassing the literary and cultural developments during the reign of King Charles I. The Cavalier poets form a subset within the broader category of Caroline poets, which includes writers from various perspectives and backgrounds during that historical period.

10.6.3 Major Characteristics of Cavalier And Caroline Lyric

Cavalier poetry emerged in the 17th Century, particularly during the English Civil War. Like the Elizabethan lyrics, the Caroline lyrics were published in various miscellanies and anthologies, such as Wits Recreation (1641) and Wit Restored (1658). Exhibits distinctive features:

Influence of Courtly and Aristocratic Culture: The refinement of Cavalier lyrics reflects the tastes and manners associated with courtly and aristocratic circles. Poets often had affiliations with royalist supporters, drawing inspiration from the sophistication of courtly life.

Elegance and Simplicity in Style: The language and style of Cavalier lyric poetry are marked by elegance and simplicity. Unlike the metaphysical poets of the same era, Cavalier poets opted for a more straightforward and less intricate approach.

Celebrations of Love and Beauty: Love is a central and celebrated theme in Cavalier lyric poetry. Poets like Robert Herrick and Thomas Carew explore various facets of love, from romantic to sensual, often portraying idealised and courtly visions.

Carpe Diem Theme: Cavalier poets frequently incorporate the "carpe diem" motif, encouraging readers to seize the day and relish the moment's pleasures. This theme is closely linked to their celebration of love and the transient nature of life.

Loyalty to Monarchy: Against the backdrop of the English Civil War, Cavalier poets express unwavering loyalty to the monarchy, especially King Charles I. Some works convey political sentiments supporting the royalist cause.

Musicality in Versification: Cavalier lyric poetry often possesses a musical quality. Poets paid meticulous attention to their verses rhythmic and melodic aspects, creating aesthetically pleasing works when read aloud.

Utilisation of Classical and Mythological Allusions: Similar to metaphysical poets, Cavalier lyricists incorporate classical and mythological references, adding depth and cultural richness to their poetry.

Expression of freedom and Individuality: Cavalier poets celebrate personal freedom and individualism, with verses conveying a carefree enjoyment and a rejection of overly intellectual or restrictive conventions.

Emphasis on Wit and Humour: Cavalier's lyric poetry frequently features wit and humour. Poets like Robert Herrick are known for playful and occasionally bawdy verses, introducing a light-hearted and entertaining dimension to their work.

Adherence to traditional forms: Unlike the metaphysical poets' experimental tendencies, Cavalier lyricists prefer traditional poetic forms such as sonnets, odes, and songs. They embrace a more conventional approach to structure.

10.7 MAJOR CAVALIER POETS

Let us examine the important poets of this school:

10.7.1 Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

Herrick is widely recognised as one of the prominent Cavalier poets of the Seventeenth Century. He was born in 1591 in a prosperous goldsmith family. He was educated at Cambridge and later appointed a Church of England minister. He was associated with the royalist cause during the English Civil War. Herrick is best known for his collection of poems entitled Hesperides (1648). The collection includes a diverse range of poems covering themes such as love, nature, and the fleeting nature of life. This

collection includes his famous poem "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time", which encapsulates the Cavalier Theme "Carpe Diem". His poetic works often expressed loyalty to the monarch, Particularly King Charles I. An important portion of Herrick's poetry revolves around the theme of love. He often celebrated love in various forms, from romantic and idealised visions to coarse expressions. The influences of classical literature and courtly traditions can be seen through the references he uses in his poems, which makes his work elegant and sophisticated. Herrick paid meticulous attention to the musicality of his verses. His poems are known for their rhythmic quality and melodic elements. Some of his works also delve into religious themes. His poems exhibit a blend of religious reverence and the more secular themes associated with Cavalier poetry. Robert Herrick's poetry is characterised by wit, lyricism, and versatility. While he is associated with the Cavalier poets, his works also showcase a unique blend of themes and styles that set him apart within the broader context of 17th-century English poetry. He continued to serve as a clergyman after the monarch was restored in 1660. He lived through the turbulent period of the English Civil War and the Subsequent Restoration.

10.7.2 Richard Lovelace (1618-58)

Richard Lovelace (1618–1658) was a prominent Cavalier poet of the 17th Century. He was born in 1618 into an affluent Kentish family. He received a classical education and attended Gloucester Hall, Oxford. He was known for his good looks, charm, and courtly demeanour. Lovelace was loyal to the royalist cause during the English Civil War. He actively fought for King Charles I and was imprisoned multiple times for his political and military activities.

Lovelace is renowned for his lyric poetry, and his most famous work is the poem "To Althea, from Prison", written during one of his incarcerations. This poem captures the Cavalier spirit, expressing a resilient and optimistic outlook even in confinement. Lovelace's poetry is characterised by its musicality, elegance, and courtly style. His verses often feature a melodic quality, reflecting the refined tastes of the Cavalier poets. Like other Cavalier poets, Lovelace's poetry expressed unwavering loyalty to the monarchy, particularly King Charles I. His works often celebrated the ideals of honour, love, and loyalty. Lovelace faced imprisonment for his political activities, and it was during one such imprisonment that he wrote some of his most famous poems. "To Althea, from Prison" is a notable example, reflecting his loyalty to the king and his resilience. Lovelace's poetry frequently explored courtly themes, including idealised visions of love, beauty, and the pursuit of honour. These themes align with the broader Cavalier tradition. Lovelace actively participated in the military conflicts of his time, fighting for the royalist cause. However, his military career was marked by setbacks, and he faced challenges after the defeat of the royalists.

Despite the challenges in his later life, Richard Lovelace's poetry continues to be celebrated for its grace, lyricism, and the embodiment of Cavalier ideals. His contributions are often viewed as emblematic of the Royalist sentiment during a tumultuous period in English history. Richard Lovelace's life and poetry encapsulate the fervent loyalty and courtly spirit characteristic of the Cavalier poets, making him a notable figure in the literary landscape of 17th-century England.

10.7.3 John Suckling (1609–42)

Sir John Suckling (1609–1642) is often regarded as one of the prominent Cavalier poets of the 17th Century. Born into a wealthy and influential family in 1609, Suckling received a classical education and later became a courtier in the royal court of King Charles I.

Throughout his poetry, he acquired a consistent thread of harsh cynicism from John Donne. In adapting borrowed elements for a broader audience, he surpasses Thomas Carew. However, unlike Carew, he attempts to emulate Donne's more elevated expressions. Rather than merely imitating Donne's serious tone, he often satirises it. In one of his songs, he starts with a line from Donne's solemn poem, "Love's Deity", to underscore the light-heartedness of what ensues. Additionally, in another instance, following a couplet in Donne's weighty style, he breaks into something resembling a chuckle.

He served as one of the courtiers in the king's entourage and became infamous for his penchant for gambling. His allegiance to the king resulted in his banishment to France, where it is speculated that he took his own life. His poetry mirrors the carefree and vivacious ambience of Cavalier's life. Notable among his works are "A Doubt of Martyrdom" and "The Constant Lover," in which he expresses surprise at having remained devoted to one woman for "three consecutive days." His verses predominantly explore themes of love, characterised by an irresistible rhythm. The lyrics convey a light and daring tone, particularly evident in his critiques of women. He injects vitality and a sense of freshness into his songs and verses, which flow with effortless grace.

10.7.4 Thomas Carew (1591–1674)

Carew was famous for his wit in his time. He was known as a courtly and polished love poet. All his poetry is the work of an amorist. Thomas Carew was indeed a prominent Cavalier poet. This group of poets, also referred to as the "Tribe of Ben" (in homage to Ben Jonson, who had a significant influence on them), were associated with the Royalist supporters of King Charles I during the English Civil War.

Thomas Carew's poetry is characterised by its sophistication, graceful language, and exploration of themes that resonate with the Cavalier tradition. His works continue to be appreciated for their lyricism and the timeless beauty of their expressions of love and desire.

In "A Rapture," Carew invites his beloved, Celia, to join him in the pursuit of love, using vivid imagery to capture the moment.

I will enjoy thee now, my Celia, come,

Moreover, fly with me to Love's Elysium.

Look, look, already how the fading light

Mellows the west, and kindles up the night;

Come, my Celia, haste, and let us prove

The eager pace of a too willing Love.

Carew's poetry often revolves around themes celebrated by the Cavalier poets, including love, beauty, pleasure, and the fleeting nature of life. His verses frequently express a carefree and lively spirit. Carew's poetry is marked by elegance and wit, and it is rich, especially when describing love and beauty. He appeals to the senses, creating a sensual experience for the reader through his carefully chosen words and picturesque depictions. His verses are crafted with care, showcasing a refined and sophisticated use of language. He often employs wordplay and clever turns of phrase to convey his ideas. While celebrating love and beauty, Carew's poetry can also reflect his time's social and political context, given his association with the Royalist cause during the English Civil War.

10.8 LET'S US SUM UP

Metaphysical Poetry stands out among various poetic forms due to its distinctive characteristics, marked by a high degree of intellectualisation. This genre often blends everyday language with paradoxes and puns, creating unusual and thought-provoking conceits. These conceits involve bizarre comparisons, such as likening a lover to a compass or equating the soul to a drop dew.

Metaphysical poets employ unconventional imagery, frequently incorporating paradoxes and conveying intricate thoughts. The complexity of their verses invites readers to engage deeply with both the intellectual and emotional aspects of the poetry. This genre introduced a novel trend in the history of

English literature, and the works of John Donne and his followers are not only acclaimed in their own time but continue to resonate in the modern age.

Metaphysical poetry, with its unique versatility, is significant in the annals of English literature. It remains popular among a diverse audience, showcasing its enduring appeal and relevance across different periods and readerships.

Cavalier lyric poetry is distinguished by its elegance, celebration of courtly ideals, exploration of love themes, loyalty to the monarchy, musicality, and a generally straightforward and traditional style, setting it apart from the more complex works of the metaphysical poets of the same period.

In conclusion, Metaphysical poetry is characterised by intellectual depth and unconventional metaphors, Cavalier poetry by elegance and celebration of life's pleasures, and Caroline poetry as a broad category encompassing the diverse poetic expressions during the reign of Charles I. These classifications provide a framework for understanding the rich and varied literary landscape of 17th-century England.

10.9 QUESTIONS

1.What do you mean by metaphysical? Who coined the term metaphysical poet?

2.What are the chief characteristics of metaphysical poetry?

3.Examine the influence of John Donne on metaphysical poetry. How did Donne's innovative use of language and unconventional themes shape the broader movement?

4.What is metaphysical conceit? Discuss with the help of an example.

5.Discuss the role of wit and conceit in metaphysical poetry. How do poets use elaborate metaphors and comparisons to convey abstract ideas?

6. Who were some key poets associated with the metaphysical movement, and what are some of their notable works?

7. What are the major themes discussed in metaphysical poetry?

8. Write a critical note on the Cavalier poetry.

9. Who were some key poets associated with the Cavalier tradition, and what are some of their notable works? How did their poetry reflect the values and attitudes of the Royalist supporters during the English Civil War?

10. How does the Carpe Diem motif manifest in Cavalier poetry? Explore the ways in which poets seize the moment and celebrate the pleasures of life in the face of uncertainty.

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UNIT 11 FRANCIS BACON AND OTHER PROSE WRITERS

Structure

11.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss the development of Elizabethan prose. In addition to this, we shall also discuss the intellectual, social and political reasons that influenced restoration period gave a certain direction to its subsequent development. After reading this Unit carefully, you will be able to:

- Understand the Elizabethan prose;
- Describe the reasons, theme and characteristics of Elizabethan prose;
- Discuss the historical background and contribution of Bacon in English prose.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to begin to read English prose from its initial point of development with historical background. English prose is a form of written or spoken language that follows natural patterns of speech, as opposed to the rhythmic and often repetitive structures found in poetry. Prose is characterized by its straightforward, narrative style and can encompass a wide range of genres, from novels and short stories to essays and journalistic pieces. Do go through all the sections and answer the questions given in 'Check Your Progress'. This will help you to remember what you have read and also give you some practice in expressing yourself in your own words. We do hope you enjoy working through this Unit.

11.2 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH PROSE

The origin and development of English prose is a fascinating journey that reflects broader shifts in culture, society, and language. Early English prose emerged in the Old English period, often influenced by Latin due to the Christianization of England. The language was heavily influenced by Germanic roots. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and religious texts like The Venerable Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People are among the earliest examples of prose.

Middle English Period (c. 1150-1500) saw significant changes due to the Norman Conquest (1066) which introduced many Norman French words into English. Prose became more diverse, including legal, religious, and literary texts. Geoffrey Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" is a key literary work of this period, showcasing prose and verse. Additionally, the Wycliffe Bible was translated into English, making religious texts more accessible.

Early Modern English Period (c. 1500-1700) brought a revival of classical learning and a shift towards more sophisticated prose. The standardization of English spelling and grammar began during this period. Sir Thomas More's Utopia and the works of William Shakespeare, while primarily known for their plays and poetry, also influenced prose through their narrative style. The King James Bible (1611) was a significant prose work that helped standardize the English language.

18th Century (The Enlightenment) emphasized clarity, reason, and formalism. Prose became more polished and structured, often reflecting the Enlightenment values of logic and rationality. Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels and Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe are exemplary of the period's prose. The development of the novel as a form gained momentum with authors like Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding.

In19th Century (Victorian Era) prose became the dominant literary form, with a focus on character development and social issues. It became more varied, reflecting the complex social changes of the era. Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, and the Brontë sisters produced influential novels that explored a wide range of themes and styles. Their works were often serialized and reached a broad audience.

20th Century prose saw the rise of modernist and postmodernist prose, characterized by experimental techniques, fragmented narratives, and diverse perspectives. James Joyce's Ulysses, Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, and the works of William Faulkner represent modernist prose, while postmodern writers like Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo explore metafiction and pastiche.

Contemporary Prose continues to evolve with a focus on diverse voices and new forms of storytelling. Writers experiment with hybrid genres and digital formats, reflecting global influences and technological advancements.

The development of English prose has been shaped by linguistic changes, cultural shifts, and literary innovations, reflecting the dynamic nature of the English language and its use in various forms of expression.

11.3 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF FRANCIS BACON

Francis Bacon (1561–1626) was an influential English philosopher, statesman, scientist, and author, renowned for his contributions to the development of the scientific method and his role in the intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment. He was born on January 22, 1561, in London, England. He was the youngest of five children in a well-connected family. His father, Sir Nicholas Bacon, was the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal under Queen Elizabeth I. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was exposed to the classical learning of the Renaissance but found the Aristotelian methods of the time inadequate. He later studied law at Gray's Inn but showed a deeper interest in philosophy and science.

Bacon began his career as a lawyer and quickly moved into politics. He became a member of Parliament in 1584 and held various legal and political positions, including Attorney General and Lord Chancellor of England. He is best known for his works on scientific methodology and philosophy. He advocated for empirical methods, emphasizing observation and experimentation over reliance on established doctrines and deductive reasoning. This approach laid the groundwork for modern scientific inquiry. He promoted inductive reasoning, which involves making generalizations based on specific observations, as opposed to deductive reasoning, which starts with general principles and applies them to specific cases. His major works are:

- "The Advancement of Learning" (1605): Bacon's early work on the nature of knowledge and the limitations of the existing methods of learning.
- "Novum Organum" (1620): A seminal work in which Bacon proposed a new method of acquiring knowledge through induction.
- "The New Atlantis" (1627): A utopian work that outlines his vision of a scientific and technological society.

In short, Bacon's political career was marked by both success and controversy. He served as Attorney General from 1613 to 1617 and as Lord Chancellor from 1618 to 1621. His tenure ended in disgrace due to charges of corruption, though he was later pardoned. Bacon's ideas greatly influenced the development of the scientific method and the rise of modern science. His emphasis on empirical research and experimentation helped to shift the focus of scientific inquiry away from purely philosophical speculation. He died on April 9, 1626 from pneumonia.

11.3.1 Francis Bacon as an Essayist

Francis Bacon is regarded as the Father of English Essays; his essays are viewed as a crucial part of his literary legacy. His collection of essays, first published in 1597 and expanded in subsequent editions, showcases his distinctive style and thoughtful observations on various aspects of human nature, society, and governance. Key Characteristics of Bacon's Essays are given below:

His Prose Style

Francis Bacon's prose style is distinctive and influential, characterized by several key features that set it apart from his contemporaries. His writing is often studied for its clarity, conciseness, and aphoristic quality. Key features of Bacon's Prose Style are:

Conciseness and Clarity: Bacon's prose is marked by its brevity and directness. He is known for his ability to distill complex ideas into succinct statements. This clarity is partly due to his use of simple and straightforward language, which makes his ideas accessible and memorable.

Aphoristic Quality: Bacon's essays often take the form of aphorisms—short, pithy statements that express general truths or observations. His essays often take the form of maxims or aphorisms. These are succinct, memorable statements that encapsulate his observations and philosophical reflections. These maxims are memorable and impactful, reflecting his philosophical approach to writing. For example, in "Of Studies," he writes, "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man."

Parallelism and Balance: Bacon frequently employs parallel structures and balanced phrases to enhance the rhythm and impact of his prose. This technique helps to emphasize contrasts and comparisons, making his arguments more compelling. He illustrates his points with examples and anecdotes drawn from history, literature, or everyday life. These examples serve to clarify and reinforce his ideas, grounding abstract concepts in concrete reality.

Rhetorical Devices: Bacon's prose is rich with rhetorical devices such as antithesis, metaphor, and analogy. He uses these devices to add depth and nuance to his writing, making his observations more vivid and persuasive. He writing sometimes takes on an epigrammatic quality, where a single sentence or phrase encapsulates a complex idea in a striking and memorable way. This style reflects his aim to provide practical wisdom and insights in a form that is easy to recall and reflect upon.

Practical Wisdom: Bacon's essays are known for their practical wisdom and keen insights into human behavior. They often provide advice on ethical and practical issues, making them relevant both in his time and today. His essays often have a contemplative and reflective tone. His prose reflects his philosophical outlook, combining analytical rigor with practical advice. This tone helps to convey his deep understanding of human nature and societal issues. He offers advice on personal conduct, governance, and other aspects of life, reflecting his belief in the utility of knowledge and experience.

Conciseness and Clarity: Bacon's writing is marked by brevity and clarity. His essays are relatively short and to the point, which was somewhat unconventional compared to the more elaborate prose of his contemporaries. His essays cover a wide range of subjects, including personal conduct, politics, philosophy, and social issues. This diversity reflects his broad intellectual curiosity and his desire to address practical concerns.

In short, Bacon's essays were highly influential in their time and continue to be studied for their philosophical insights and stylistic innovation. They are considered an important contribution to English literature and philosophy, blending practical advice with profound observations. His essays reflect his broader intellectual pursuits and his commitment to understanding and improving human life through reason and empirical observation.

11.4   MAJOR ESSAYISTS OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

There are several prominent figures who have made significant contributions to the genre of the essay. Each has left a lasting mark with their unique style and thematic concerns.

11.4.1 Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)

Samuel Johnson, a prominent 18th-century essayist, is known for his work in "The Rambler," a series of essays he wrote between 1750 and 1752. Johnson's essays are celebrated for their moral reflections, literary criticism, and wit. He also contributed significantly to the development of the English language with his dictionary, "A Dictionary of the English Language." His prose is characterized by its formal structure, moral seriousness, and a comprehensive approach to the subjects he addresses. His essays often blend philosophical reflection with practical advice. He wrote for periodicals and composed poetry, including The Vanity of Human Wishes (1749), the first work he published under his name. In 1755, he produced *A Dictionary of the English Language (1755)*, the first great English dictionary, which brought him fame. He continued to write for such periodicals as The Gentleman's Magazine, and he almost single-handedly wrote and edited the biweekly The Rambler (1750–52). Rasselas (1759) was his only long work of fiction. In 1765 he produced a critical edition of William Shakespeare with a preface that did much to establish Shakespeare as the centre of the English literary canon. Johnson's travel writings include A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland (1775). His Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, to the Works of the English Poets (1779–81) was a significant critical work.

11.4.2 William Hazlitt (1778–1830)

Hazlitt is known for his essays on literature, art, and society, which were published in various collections, including "Table Talk" and "The Spirit of the Age." His essays are notable for their vivid style and incisive critique of contemporary culture and politics. His prose is passionate and personal, often reflecting his own opinions and experiences. His essays are rich in rhetorical flair and vivid language.

11.4.3 Charles Lamb (1775–1834)

Charles Lamb is renowned for his charming and often autobiographical essays, which were published under the pseudonym "Elia." His essays, collected in "Essays of Elia," offer reflections on everyday life, literature, and personal experiences. His writing is characterized by its personal tone, humor, and nostalgic reflections. His essays are intimate and engaging, providing a window into his life and times.

11.4.4 George Orwell (1903–1950)

Orwell is known for his critical and politically engaged essays, which explore issues of politics, society, and language. His works, such as "Politics and the English Language" and "The Road to Wigan Pier," are significant for their incisive analysis and clear prose. His essays are direct, clear, and often polemical. His writing is known for its commitment to social justice and political clarity.

11.4.5 Virginia Woolf (1882–1941)

Woolf made substantial contributions to the essay genre with her reflective and experimental prose. Her essays, such as those in "A Room of One's Own," explore themes of gender, literature, and the self. His essays are noted for their lyrical prose and stream-of-consciousness style, blending personal reflection with broader societal critique.

Each of these essayists has contributed uniquely to English literature, bringing their own styles, perspectives, and thematic concerns to the genre. While Bacon is often cited as a pioneering figure in the essay form, others like Johnson, Hazlitt, Lamb, Orwell, and Woolf have also played crucial roles in shaping the essay as a literary genre.

11.5 LET'S US SUM UP

In this Unit we have discussed Francis Bacon and few other important prose writers of English literature that will be helpful to understand. We have given you:

- a detail introduction to Francis Bacon.
- an idea to understand the origin and development of English Prose.
- an outline of chief characteristics of Francis Bacon's prose style.
- a detail discussion on major writers of English prose.
- a brief guideline on how to read an Essayist.

11.6 QUESTIONS

1. How did Francis Bacon's background in law and politics influence his approach to scientific inquiry and philosophy, and in what ways did his political career intersect with his intellectual pursuits?

2. In what ways did Francis Bacon's ideas about inductive reasoning and empirical research challenge the existing scientific methodologies of his time, and how did these ideas contribute to the development of the modern scientific method?

3. What are the central themes of Bacon's philosophical and scientific essays?

4. How did Francis Bacon's concept of contemporary knowledge and reasoning propose to overcome intellectual obstacles?

5. What were the main criticisms of Francis Bacon's philosophy and scientific methods by his contemporaries and later thinkers, and how have these criticisms evolved in modern evaluations of his work?

6. How did Francis Bacon's philosophical writings influence the development of empiricism and the Enlightenment, and what role did his ideas play in shaping the trajectory of modern Western philosophy?

7. In what ways did Francis Bacon's approach to science and knowledge differ from that of other early modern philosophers like René Descartes and Galileo Galilei, and how did these differences impact the advancement of scientific thought?

8. How did Bacon's vision of a unified scientific method, as described in his works, propose to integrate different fields of knowledge, and to what extent has this vision been realized in contemporary scientific practice?

9. What were the practical implications of Bacon's ideas for scientific experimentation and innovation during his time, and how did his recommendations influence the practices of early scientists and researchers?

10. How did Francis Bacon's ideas on the role of science in society reflect his views on the relationship between knowledge, power, and human progress, and how do these ideas resonate with or differ from contemporary perspectives on the social impact of science?

11.7 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 12 PURITAN MOVEMENT AND POETS

Structure

12.0   Objectives

12.1   Introduction

12.2   Puritan Movement: Literary Approach

12.3   Chief Characteristics of Puritan Movements

12.4   Major Writers of Puritan Movements

       12.4.1 John Milton

       12.4.2 John Winthrop

       12.4.3 William Bradford

       12.4.4 Cotton Mather

       12.4.5 Jonathan Adwards

       12.4.6 Anne Bradstreet

       12.4.7 Edward Taylor

12.5   Let Us Sum Up

12.6   Questions

12.7   Further Readings

12.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss the development of Puritan Movements. In addition to this, we shall also discuss the intellectual, social and political reasons that influenced puritan period gave a certain direction to its subsequent development. After reading this Unit carefully, you will be able to:

- Understand the main trends in Puritan Movements;
- Describe the reasons in the development of Puritan Movements;

- Discuss the historical background of Puritan Movements in English.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to begin to read Puritan Movements from its initial point of development with historical background. Puritan Movements is discussed with their themes and characteristics. The Puritan movement was a Protestant reform movement in 16th and 17th century England that sought to purify the Church of England of Roman Catholic influences. In this unit, we will be able to experience its different dimensions: as 'literature' as well as 'theatre'. Do go through all the sections and answer the questions given in 'Check Your Progress'. This unit will help you to remember what you have read and also give you some practice in expressing yourself in your own words. We do hope you enjoy working through this Unit.

12.2 PURITAN MOVEMENT: LITERARY APPROACH

The Puritan movement, which began in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, had a profound impact on literature, especially in colonial America. A literary approach to understanding this movement involves examining how Puritan beliefs and values influenced their writing, as well as how their literature reflects their religious, social, and cultural priorities. Here are some key aspects to consider:

Puritans were a group of English Protestants who sought to "purify" the Church of England from what they considered to be remnants of Roman Catholicism. They emphasized a strict adherence to the Bible, a moral and disciplined lifestyle, and the belief in predestination. Many Puritans migrated to North America in the early 17th century to escape religious persecution and establish a society based on their ideals.

Puritan writing often favoured plain style, focusing on clarity and directness rather than elaborate or ornate language. This reflected their belief in the importance of sincerity and straightforwardness in communication. Much of Puritan literature was didactic, aimed at teaching moral or religious lessons. It was designed to instruct readers on how to live a pious life and understand God's will. Puritan literature deals the themes of sin, redemption, and divine providence are prevalent. The Puritans often explored human nature, the struggle between good and evil, and the workings of God's grace. Preaching was a major form of Puritan literature. Sermons were used to convey moral teachings and reflect on biblical passages.

Many Puritans wrote detailed accounts of their lives and the history of their communities, such as William Bradford's "Of Plymouth Plantation." The themes and styles of Puritan literature laid the

groundwork for later American literary traditions, including the exploration of individualism and the American experience. Puritan literature includes feminist, postcolonial, and psychological perspectives, to better understand its impact and significance.

In short, a literary approach to the Puritan movement involves analyzing how Puritan values and beliefs shaped their writing, the distinctive characteristics of their literary works, and the broader impact of their literature on American literary traditions.

12.3 CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS OF PURITAN MOVEMENTS

Puritan movements, which emerged primarily in England during the late 16th and early 17th centuries, were a significant religious and social force. Here are some of the chief characteristics:

Religious Reform and Purity: Puritans sought to "purify" the Church of England from what they considered to be residual Catholic practices. They aimed for a more reformed and simplified version of Christianity, emphasizing a direct and personal relationship with God.

Emphasis on Scripture: Puritans held the Bible as the ultimate authority in religious matters. They stressed rigorous Bible study and the importance of preaching and interpreting Scripture in everyday life.

Predestination and Election: They believed in the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, which posits that God has already chosen who will be saved and who will be damned. This belief led to a focus on signs of being among the "elect" and living a life that reflected one's chosen status.

Moral Rigidity and Discipline: Puritan communities were known for their strict moral codes and discipline. They emphasized personal piety, modesty, and a strong work ethic. Recreational activities that were deemed frivolous or immoral, such as theater and dancing, were often discouraged or banned.

Community and Covenant: Puritans placed a high value on community and the idea of a "covenant" with God. They believed that their community was bound together by a shared commitment to live according to God's will and that communal success was tied to collective piety.

Education and Literacy: The Puritans were strong advocates of education. They established schools and colleges, like Harvard in 1636, to ensure that their communities were well-educated and capable of reading and interpreting the Bible.

Theocratic Governance: In practice, Puritan societies often incorporated their religious beliefs into their political systems. They established governments based on religious principles, where church leaders held significant influence over civic matters.

Missionary Zeal: Puritans were driven by a sense of mission, both in their religious practice and in their colonial ventures. They sought to create a "model" Christian society and, in their New England colonies, often worked to convert Native Americans to Christianity.

These characteristics contributed to the distinctive nature of Puritanism and influenced the development of American culture, especially in the early colonial period.

12.4 Major Writers of Puritan Movements

Several influential writers emerged from the Puritan movement, contributing significantly to literature, theology, and social thought. Here are some key figures:

12.4.1 John Milton

John Milton (1608–1674) was a major figure in English literature and politics, known for his epic poetry and his fervent political and religious beliefs. His life and work reflect the turbulent times in which he lived and his deep engagement with the key issues of his era. He was born on December 9, 1608, in London, England. He was the second of three children born to John Milton, a composer and scrivener (a type of lawyer or notary), and Sarah Milton. His family was financially stable, allowing him a good education. He attended St. Paul's School in London, where he was exposed to classical literature and languages. He later went to Christ's College, Cambridge, where he excelled in his studies. His education was marked by a strong interest in classical literature, theology, and philosophy.

Milton began writing poetry at a young age. His early works include *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* (1632), which reflect his engagement with themes of happiness and contemplation. John Milton is often associated with his Puritan beliefs, which deeply influenced his work as a poet. His Puritanism, however, was not just a personal faith but also a significant aspect of his literary and political identity.

Puritan Belief and Milton's Work

Religious and Moral Themes: Milton's Puritanism is evident in his focus on religious and moral themes. His most famous work, *Paradise Lost*, reflects Puritan concerns with sin, redemption, and divine justice. The epic explores the Fall of Man, the nature of evil, and the possibility of salvation, aligning with

Puritan ideas about the inherent sinful nature of humanity and the possibility of redemption through God's grace.

Advocacy for Religious Freedom: Milton's Puritanism also influenced his views on religious freedom. He was an advocate for the separation of church and state and wrote extensively on the subject. In works like *Areopagitica*, he argued against censorship and for the freedom of the press, a stance rooted in his belief in individual conscience and the importance of personal interpretation of scripture.

Political Views: Milton's Puritan beliefs extended into his political life. He supported the Parliamentary cause during the English Civil War and was a proponent of the Commonwealth, which sought to replace the monarchy with a more theocratic government. His political writings, such as *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, argue for the right to depose tyrannical rulers, reflecting his commitment to Puritan ideals of righteous governance.

Style and Language: Milton's writing style, characterized by its grandiloquence and complex syntax, was influenced by his Puritan ideals, emphasizing the gravity and moral seriousness of his subjects. His use of blank verse in *Paradise Lost* was innovative and aimed to elevate the epic to a level befitting its religious and moral themes.

Theological and Philosophical Depth: Milton's Puritanism is also reflected in the theological and philosophical depth of his poetry. *Paradise Lost* and other works explore profound questions about free will, predestination, and the nature of divine justice, demonstrating Milton's engagement with the complex theological debates of his time.

John Milton's Literary Works

Milton composed his great piece of work "Paradise Lost" (a magnum opus and an epic poem) as a blind poet during the period 1658-1664. Several critics are of the view that this poem reflects the personal despair of Milton due to the failure of the Revolution. In 1671, Milton published, "Paradise Regained" a sequel to "Paradise Lost". In addition, he published a tragedy "Samson Agonistes alongside that sequel in 1671. In 1673, Milton republished his 1645 poem's collection accompanied by Latin prolusions and collections of his letters from his Cambridge days.

"Arcades" (a masque he wrote to give praise to Alice Spencer's Character)

"How Soon Hath Time", (a poem that talks about how fleeting time),

"At a Solemn Music", (a poem that describes the feelings and emotions brought about when listening to a solemn music),

"An Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatic Poet, W. Shakespeare";

"Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity";

"Lycidas":

"On His Blindness";

Samson Agonists";

"Paradise Lost":

"Paradise Regained";

"On His Deceased Wife";

"On Shakespeare"; and

"O Nightingale".

During the years of the English Civil War, Milton worked under Oliver Cromwell to create pamphlets advocating for religious freedom, divorce and the freedom of the press. He also served in Cromwell's government as secretary for foreign languages. It was in 1651-52 that Milton became completely blind. Milton was arrested in 1660 after Charles II came to the throne and lived out the rest of his life in the country, secluded from the world, working on his epic poem, Paradise Lost. This poem would serve as his legacy, and come to be considered among the greatest poems ever written. Milton's works would come to inspire many poets of the future, including Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Blake, and William Wordsworth.

12.4.2 John Winthrop

John Winthrop (1588–1649), a leading figure in the early Puritan settlement in America, Winthrop is best known for his sermon "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630), delivered aboard the Arbella. In it, he articulated the vision of the Puritans as a "city upon a hill," a model of Christian virtue and communal responsibility.

12.4.3 William Bradford

William Bradford (1590–1657)was the governor of the Plymouth Colony and authored "Of Plymouth Plantation," a detailed chronicle of the Pilgrims' journey to America and their early experiences in the New World. His work is a crucial primary source for understanding the early colonial period.

12.4.4 Cotton Mather

Cotton Mather (1663–1728) was a prolific writer and a prominent New England minister. His notable works include "Magnalia Christi Americana" (1702), an ecclesiastical history of New England, and "Wonders of the Invisible World" (1693), a defense of the Salem witch trials.

12.4.5 Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) was a key figure in the First Great Awakening, a revivalist movement within Puritanism. His most famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (1741), is renowned for its vivid imagery and powerful rhetoric emphasizing the doctrines of predestination and the necessity of personal conversion.

12.4.6 Anne Bradstreet

Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672) is often considered America's first published poet, Bradstreet's works reflect her Puritan faith and the challenges of her life in the New World. Her poetry includes "The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America" (1650) and is noted for its exploration of personal and spiritual themes.

12.4.7 Edward Taylor

Edward Taylor (1642–1729) was a colonial American poet and pastor known for his metaphysical poetry and meditative works. His collection, "Preparatory Meditations," explores Puritan themes of divine grace and personal piety.

These writers not only influenced Puritan thought but also left a lasting impact on American literature and religious discourse.

12.5 LET'S US SUM UP

In this Unit we have discussed Puritan Movement and few other important prose writers of English literature that will be helpful to understand. We have given you:

- a detail introduction to Puritan Movement.

- an idea to understand the origin and development of Puritan Movement.

- an outline of chief characteristics of Puritan Movement.

- a detail discussion on major writers of Puritan Movement.

- a brief guideline on how to read a literary Movements.

12.6 QUESTIONS

1. How do the themes of predestination and election in Puritan literature reflect the broader theological beliefs of the Puritan movement, and how are these themes explored in the works of key Puritan writers such as Jonathan Edwards and Anne Bradstreet?

2. In what ways do John Winthrop's writings, particularly "A Model of Christian Charity," illustrate the Puritan vision of creating a "city upon a hill," and how do these ideas manifest in the social and political structures of early New England colonies?

3. How does William Bradford's "Of Plymouth Plantation" portray the relationship between the Pilgrims and the Native Americans, and what does this account reveal about Puritan attitudes toward indigenous peoples and their role in colonial expansion?

4. What role does moral and religious discipline play in the works of Cotton Mather, especially in "Magnalia Christi Americana," and how does Mather's portrayal of New England's religious history reflect his views on the role of clergy and the church in society?

5. How do the metaphysical elements in Edward Taylor's poetry, such as those found in "Preparatory Meditations," serve to express Puritan beliefs about divine grace and personal salvation, and how do these elements compare with the religious themes found in Jonathan Edwards' sermons?

6. In what ways does Anne Bradstreet's poetry, including works like "The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America," navigate the tension between personal expression and Puritan norms, and how does her work reflect the role of women within Puritan society?

7. How does the rhetoric of Jonathan Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" utilize vivid imagery and fear to convey Puritan concepts of sin and redemption, and what impact did this sermon have on the First Great Awakening and its followers?

8. How do the representations of providence and divine intervention in Puritan literature reflect the broader cultural and theological anxieties of the time, and what does this reveal about the Puritan worldview as expressed in both historical and literary texts?

9. What is the significance of the Puritan emphasis on communal identity and social conformity in the literature of the period, and how do writers such as John Winthrop and Cotton Mather address the challenges and successes of maintaining a unified religious community?

10. How does Puritan literature address the conflict between individual spiritual experience and communal religious expectations, and how do different authors reconcile or exacerbate these tensions in their writings?

12.7 FURTHER READINGS

Mundra. S.C. *A Compendious History of English Literature*. Prakash Book Depot. Bareilly

Singh. Dr. Raghavendra. *Introduction to Movements, Ages, and Literary Forms*. Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, Varanasi. 2004

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BLOCK IV -RESTORATION AND NEO-CLASSICAL AGE

INTRODUCTION TO BLOCK IV

Dear learners! This block is aimed at making you aware of Restoration and Neo-classical Age. This block is divided into four units from the 13th to the 16ᵗʰ. Unit 13th focuses on Restoration drama in English literature. Restoration drama" is English drama written and performed in the Restoration period of 1660–1700. The 14ᵗʰ unit aimed to discuss Neo classical age and literature. The Neoclassical Age in literature, also known as the Age of Enlightenment or the Age of Reason, spanned roughly from the late 17th century to the late 18th century. It was characterized by a revival of classical ideals from ancient Greece and Rome, as well as an emphasis on reason, order, and rationality. Neoclassical literature aimed to emulate the works of classical writers such as Homer, Virgil, and Horace, focusing on clarity, precision, and balance The 15ᵗʰ Unit deals with the Periodical essay and Essayist. The unit focuses on the important essays and essayists of English literature. The 16th and last unit of the block focuses on rise of novel and important novelists. In short, after studying this block, you will be able to understand the philosophical, psychological, and realist ways of thinking about Restoration and Neo-classical Age of English literature.

UNIT 13 RESTORATION DRAMAS

Structure

13.0 Objectives

13.1 Introduction

13.2 Restoration Drama: Literary Approach

13.3 Chief Characteristics of Restoration Drama

13.4 Important Writers of Restoration Drama

      13.4.1 William Whychery (1641-1716)

      13.4.2 John Dryden (1631-1700)

      13.4.3 George Etherege (1636-1692)

      13.4.4 Aphra Behn (1640-1689)

      13.4.5 Thomas Otway (1652-1685)

      13.4.6 William Congreve (1670- 1729)

13.5 Let Us Sum Up

13.6 Questions

13.7 Further Readings

13.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss the development of Restoration drama. In addition to this, we shall also discuss the intellectual, social and political reasons that influenced restoration period gave a certain direction to its subsequent development. After reading this Unit carefully, you will be able to:

- Understand the main trends in Restoration drama;
- .Describe the reasons in the development of restoration period;
- Discuss the historical background of the restoration plays in English.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to begin to read Restoration drama from its initial point of development with historical background. Restoration dramas are discussed with their themes and characteristics. It is only then that we will be able to experience the play in its different dimensions: as 'literature' as well as 'theatre'. Do go through all the sections and answer the questions given in 'Check Your Progress'. This will help you to remember what you have read and also give you some practice in expressing yourself in your own words. We do hope you enjoy working through this Unit.

13.2 RESTORATION DRAMA: LITERARY APPROACH

Restoration drama refers to the theatrical works produced in England during the Restoration period, which lasted from 1660 to about 1710. This era marked the return of monarchy after the English Civil War and the subsequent rule of Oliver Cromwell. The restoration of Charles II to the throne brought about a significant shift in English society, including in the arts and literature. Restoration drama was characterized by its wit, sophistication, and focus on social manners and sexual intrigues. The theater became a prominent form of entertainment, with the reopening of theaters and the emergence of new playhouses such as the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. There are some key features of Restoration drama include:

Comedy of Manners: This was a popular genre that satirized the manners and social customs of the aristocracy. Playwrights like William Congreve, George Etherege, and William Wycherley were known for their witty dialogues and sharp observations of society.

Heroic Drama: These plays were often grand and elaborate, with themes of honor, love, and conflict. John Dryden's "The Conquest of Granada" is a notable example of heroic drama.

Restoration Tragedy: Tragedies during this period often featured noble protagonists facing downfall due to their own flaws or circumstances. Thomas Otway's "Venice Preserved" and John Dryden's "All for Love" are examples of Restoration tragedies.

Female Performers: Unlike during the Puritanical era when women were not allowed to perform on stage, the Restoration saw the introduction of actresses, adding a new dynamic to theater productions.

Bawdy and Satirical Elements: Restoration drama often contained sexual innuendos, double entendres, and satire aimed at the political and social issues of the time.

The Comedy of Intrigue: This subgenre focused on complex plots involving mistaken identities, disguise, and romantic entanglements. Examples include George Farquhar's "The Beaux' Stratagem" and Aphra Behn's "The Rover."

Restoration drama played a significant role in shaping English theater and influencing later literary movements. Its impact can still be seen in modern comedy, drama, and satire.

13.3 CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS OF RESTORATION DRAMA

Restoration drama refers to English theater produced during the Restoration period, which spanned from 1660 to around 1710. Here are some chief points of Restoration drama:

Royal Patronage: Restoration drama emerged after the restoration of the English monarchy under Charles II in 1660. The monarchy's return led to the revival of theater, with King Charles II granting royal patents to two theater companies: the King's Company and the Duke's Company. This royal patronage encouraged the growth of theater and drama.

Classical Influences: Restoration drama was heavily influenced by classical Greek and Roman theatre. Playwrights like John Dryden and William Wycherley sought to emulate the wit, structure, and themes of ancient comedies and tragedies.

Comedy of Manners: One of the most notable features of Restoration drama is the Comedy of Manners. This genre focused on satirizing the manners and behaviors of the aristocracy. Characters were often witty, cynical, and driven by desires for love, money, and social status. Plays like Wycherley's "The Country Wife" and Congreve's "The Way of the World" exemplify this genre.

Sexuality and Libertinism: Restoration drama was characterized by its frank portrayal of sexuality and libertine behavior. Themes of adultery, seduction, and promiscuity were common, reflecting the libertine culture of the time. Playwrights like Aphra Behn explored these themes in works like "The Rover."

Female Playwrights: The Restoration period saw an increase in female participation in theater, both as performers and playwrights. Aphra Behn, in particular, gained renown as one of the first professional female playwrights in England. Her works often challenged gender norms and explored themes of love and power.

Decline of Puritan Influence: The Restoration period marked a departure from the strict moral codes imposed by the Puritans during the Interregnum. Theaters were reopened, and dramatic works became more licentious and irreverent, reflecting the changing social attitudes of the time.

Satirical and Political Themes: Restoration drama often featured satirical commentary on contemporary society and politics. Playwrights used humor and wit to critique social norms, government corruption, and the aristocracy. Dryden's "Absalom and Achitophel" is a notable example of political satire from this period.

The Influence of French Drama: French drama, particularly the works of playwrights like Molière, also had a significant impact on Restoration theater. French plays were translated and adapted for English audiences, influencing the style and structure of Restoration drama.   In conclusion, Restoration drama is characterized by its wit, satire, and exploration of themes related to love, social hierarchy, and morality, making it a rich and vibrant period in English theatrical history.

13.4 IMPORTANT WRITERS OF RESTORATION DRAMA

Restoration drama, which emerged in England during the late 17th century, was a vibrant and influential period in English literature and theater. Some of the important writers of Restoration drama include:

13.4.1 William Wycherley (1641–1716)

William Wycherley was born around 1641, likely in Oxfordshire, England. He attended Oxford University, where he studied at Queen's College. He served in the military during the English Civil War, supporting the Royalist cause. He is known for his wit and charm and gained a reputation for his involvement in various scandals and romantic escapades, which often influenced his writing.

He spent some time in Fleet Prison due to debts incurred from gambling and lavish living. He married in his later years and received a pension from King James II, but he faced financial difficulties throughout his life. He died in 1716 in London.

His Major Works

"Love in a Wood" (1671): His first play, which is a comedy of manners, set in a rural setting, exploring themes of love, deceit, and social class.

"The Country Wife" (1675): His most famous work, Which is comedy of manners, satirizes the manners and morals of the upper class, particularly focusing on the themes of marital infidelity and sexual intrigue.

"The Plain Dealer" (1676): Another notable comedy, known for its adaptation of Molière's "Le Misanthrope". It portrays a cynical protagonist who despises social hypocrisy.

"The Gentleman Dancing-Master" (1672) and "The Plain Dealer" (1676): These are among his other plays, though they are less frequently performed compared to his more famous works.

Prose Works: Wycherley also wrote prose works, including letters and essays, but he is primarily remembered for his plays.

In Short, his works are characterized by their sharp wit, satire of societal norms, and exploration of themes such as love, marriage, and social hierarchy. Despite facing controversy during his lifetime, his plays continue to be studied and performed today for their insight into Restoration society and their enduring comedic value.

13.4.2 John Dryden (1631–1700)

John Dryden was born on August 9, 1631, in Aldwincle, Northamptonshire, England. He attended Westminster School and then Trinity College, Cambridge. His literary career began with his poem "Heroic Stanzas" (1659) on the death of Oliver Cromwell. In 1668, Dryden was appointed Poet Laureate, a position he held until his death. He died on May 12, 1700, in London, England.

His Works: Dryden wrote numerous plays, including comedies, tragedies, and heroic dramas, which were significant contributions to Restoration drama.

Translation: He is also renowned for his translations, including his rendition of Virgil's "Aeneid" and the works of Juvenal and Persius.

Literary Criticism: Dryden wrote influential essays on literary theory and criticism, such as "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy" (1668) and "Of Dramatick Poesie, an Essay" (1667).

Poetry: Dryden's poetry encompasses various themes, including politics, religion, love, and morality. Notable works include "Absalom and Achitophel" (1681), "Annus Mirabilis" (1667), and "Religio Laici" (1682).

Plays: Dryden wrote numerous plays, such as "All for Love" (1677), "The Indian Emperor" (1665), "The Spanish Friar" (1681), and "The Conquest of Granada" (1670).

In short, John Dryden remains a central figure in English literature, known for his versatility, literary innovation, and influence on subsequent generations of writers.

13.4.3 George Etherege (1636–1692)

Etherege is remembered for his witty comedies, particularly "The Man of Mode" (1676), which portrays the rakish behavior of the Restoration elite. George Etherege was an English dramatist born around 1636

and died around 1691. He was born into a wealthy family, possibly in Maidenhead, Berkshire, England, though details about his early life are scant. He began his career as a diplomat, serving as a secretary to the English ambassador in Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul).

His Works

He is best known for his witty comedies of manners, which were popular during the Restoration period. His major works include:

"The Comical Revenge, or, Love in a Tub" (1664): His first play, which established his reputation as a playwright.

"She Would If She Could" (1668): A comedy of manners known for its lively dialogue and depiction of Restoration society.

"The Man of Mode, or, Sir Fopling Flutter" (1676): Perhaps his most famous work, celebrated for its sharp satire of fashionable society and its memorable characters, including Sir Fopling Flutter.

In short, Etherege is remembered as one of the key figures of Restoration drama. His works continue to be studied and performed for their insight into the social and cultural milieu of the time.

13.4.4 Aphra Behn (1640–1689)

Behn was one of the first Englishwomen to earn a living through writing. Her plays often explored themes of gender and power, with notable works like "The Rover" (1677), a comedy set in Naples during Carnival.

13.4.5 Thomas Otway (1652–1685)

Otway is best known for his tragedies, including "Venice Preserv'd" (1682), a political drama set in Venice, and "The Orphan" (1680), which explores themes of betrayal and revenge.

13.4.6 William Congreve (1670–1729)

Congreve is celebrated for his witty and sophisticated comedies, such as "The Way of the World" (1700), which satirizes the manners and social conventions of the aristocracy. He was born on January 24, 1670, in Bardsey, England. He attended Kilkenny College in Ireland and later Trinity College in Dublin. In 1689, he moved to London to study law at the Middle Temple but soon abandoned his legal studies to

pursue a literary career. He became one of the most successful playwrights of his time, writing some of the most acclaimed comedies of the Restoration period. He passed away on January 19, 1729, in London.

His Works

The Old Bachelor (1693): Congreve's first play, a comedy that was well-received and established his reputation as a playwright.

The Double Dealer (1693): Another successful comedy, known for its complex plot and witty dialogue.

Love for Love (1695): Considered one of Congreve's masterpieces, this comedy explores themes of love, marriage, and money.

The Mourning Bride (1697): Congreve's only tragedy, although it was not as successful as his comedies.

The Way of the World (1700): Often regarded as Congreve's finest work, this comedy is celebrated for its intricate plot, sharp wit, and memorable characters.

Poetry: Congreve also wrote poetry, including odes and verses, although his plays overshadowed his poetic works.

These are major playwrights who contributed to the flourishing of Restoration drama, which was characterized by its wit, satire, and exploration of social and political themes.

13.5 LET'S US SUM UP

In this Unit we have discussed certain topics that will be helpful in approaching the Restoration Drama. We have given you:

- a detail introduction to Restoration Drama.
- an idea to understand the origin and development of Restoration   Drama
- an outline of chief characteristics of Restoration Drama.
- a detail discussion on major writers of Restoration period.
- a brief guidelines on how to read a play.

13.6 QUESTIONS

A. Long Answer Type Question

1. What were the key features of Restoration comedy, and how did playwrights like William Congreve and George Etherege contribute to its development?

2. In what ways did the portrayal of gender roles and relationships in Restoration drama reflect the shifting dynamics of society during this period?

3. How did the Restoration stage and performance conventions shape the structure and presentation of plays during this era?

4. Explore the significance of wit and wordplay in Restoration comedy, with reference to specific plays and playwrights?

5. Discuss the influence of French and Spanish drama on Restoration playwrights, and how elements of these traditions were adapted and incorporated into English theatrical practices.

6. Discuss the censorship and regulation of Restoration drama, and the ways in which playwrights navigated these constraints while still pushing the boundaries of societal norms.

7. Explore the influence of classical literature and drama on Restoration playwrights, and how they adapted classical themes and motifs to suit the tastes and sensibilities of their contemporary audience.

8. Evaluate the legacy of Restoration drama in later literary movements and genres, and its continued relevance in modern theater and literature.

B. Short Answer Type Question

1. When did the Restoration period in English literature occur?

Ans. The Restoration period lasted from 1660 to about 1710.

2. Who was the reigning monarch during the Restoration period?

Ans. Charles II was the monarch during the Restoration period.

3. What historical event marked the beginning of the Restoration period?

Ans. The Restoration period began with the return of Charles II to the English throne in 1660, following the collapse of the English Commonwealth.

4. What were some key characteristics of Restoration drama?

Ans. Restoration drama was known for its wit, humor, satire, and focus on societal manners and conventions.

5. Who were some notable playwrights of the Restoration era?

Ans. Some notable playwrights include William Wycherley, William Congreve, and John Dryden.

6. What was the significance of women on the Restoration stage?

Ans. The Restoration period saw women appearing on the English stage for the first time, marking a significant shift in theatrical practices.

7. What was the impact of the Restoration period on English theater?

Ans. The Restoration period revitalized English theater after its closure during the Puritan era, leading to the emergence of new dramatic forms and styles.

8. What were some common themes in Restoration drama?

Ans. Common themes included love, marriage, infidelity, social class, and the clash between appearance and reality.

9. What is a "comedy of manners" in Restoration drama?

Ans. A comedy of manners is a subgenre of Restoration drama that satirizes the behavior and conventions of the upper class, often focusing on the intricacies of courtship and marriage.

10. How did politics influence Restoration drama?

Ans. Politics played a significant role in Restoration drama, with many plays reflecting the political tensions and debates of the time, often in a satirical manner.

13.7 FURTHER READINGS

Mundra. S.C. *A Compendious History of English Literature*. Prakash Book Depot. Bareilly

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UNIT 14 NEO - CLASSICAL AGE AND LITERATURE

Structure

14.0   OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss the development of Neo classical literature. In addition to this   we shall also discuss the intellectual, social and political reasons that influenced Neo classical period and gave a certain direction to its subsequent development. After reading this Unit carefully, you will be able to:

- Understand the main trends in Neo classical Age.
- Describe the reasons in the development of Neo classical period;
- Discuss the historical background of the Neo classical literature in English.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to begin to read Neo classical literature from its initial point of development with historical background. Neo classical literature is discussed with their themes and characteristics. It is only then that we will be able to experience the literature in its different dimensions: as 'literature' as well as 'historical background. Do go through all the sections and answer the questions given in 'Check Your Progress'. This will help you to remember what you have read and also give you some practice in expressing yourself in your own words. We do hope you enjoy working through this Unit.

14.2 NEO CLASSICAL AGE: LITERARY APPROACH

The Neoclassical Age, also known as the Age of Reason or the Enlightenment, emerged in Europe during the 18th century. It was characterized by a shift towards rationalism, empirical inquiry, and a renewed interest in classical antiquity, particularly Greco-Roman culture and philosophy. It witnessed significant political upheavals, including the American Revolution (1775–1783) and the French Revolution (1789–1799). These revolutions challenged monarchical authority, advocating for democratic governance, constitutional rights, and social reform. Some chief points of neoclassical age are given below:

Industrial Revolution: While the Industrial Revolution began in the late 18th century and extended into the 19th century, its early stages overlapped with the Neoclassical Age. The Industrial Revolution transformed economies, societies, and lifestyles through technological innovations, urbanization, and the rise of capitalism.

Cultural Revival: Neoclassicism sought to revive the cultural achievements of ancient Greece and Rome. Artists, writers, and architects drew inspiration from classical ideals of harmony, proportion, and order. Neoclassical art and literature often portrayed moral themes, celebrated reason, and critiqued excesses of the past.

Social Stratification: Despite the emphasis on reason and progress, the Neoclassical Age was marked by social hierarchies and inequalities. Elite salons and academies served as intellectual centers, while the masses endured poverty, exploitation, and limited access to education and political rights. It was characterized by a revival of classical ideals and a focus on reason, order, and rationality. In literature, this period saw a shift away from the ornate style of the Renaissance towards a more restrained and disciplined form of expression.

Classical Influence: Neoclassical writers looked back to the literature of ancient Greece and Rome for inspiration. They admired the works of authors like Homer, Virgil, and Horace, and sought to emulate their emphasis on balance, clarity, and harmony.

Rationalism and Enlightenment Thought: The Neoclassical Age coincided with the Enlightenment, a period of intellectual ferment characterized by a belief in the power of reason and scientific inquiry. Neoclassical writers embraced these ideals and sought to apply them to literature, advocating for clarity, logic, and moral instruction in their works.

Satire and Moral Instruction: Satire was a prominent genre during the Neoclassical Age, with writers like Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope using wit and irony to critique the social and political issues of their time. Moral instruction was also a key goal of Neo-classical literature, with writers often using their works to impart lessons about virtue, duty, and proper conduct.

The Rise of the Novel: While poetry and drama remained important forms of literature during the Neoclassical Age, the period also saw the rise of the novel as a popular literary genre. Writers like Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding produced influential works of fiction that explored themes of morality, social class, and human nature.

The Royal Society and Literary Societies: The Neo-classical Age saw the emergence of various literary societies and clubs, where writers could gather to discuss literature, philosophy, and science. The Royal Society, founded in 1660, played a central role in promoting scientific inquiry and intellectual exchange during this period.

Overall, the Neo-classical Age was characterized by a commitment to reason, order, and moral instruction in literature, as writers sought to emulate the clarity and harmony of classical works while engaging with the social and intellectual currents of their own time. In conclusion, the Neoclassical Age reflected a period of intellectual ferment, social change, and cultural revival, laying the groundwork for modernity and the enduring legacy of rationalism.

14.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF NEO CLASSICAL LITERATURE

Neoclassical literature emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries, drawing inspiration from classical Greek and Roman texts. Writers looked to authors like Virgil, Homer, and Horace for guidance. Some chief Characteristics of Neoclassical literature are:

Emphasis on Reason and Order: Neoclassical writers valued reason, logic, and order above emotion and imagination. They sought to emulate the rationality and clarity of classical works. Neoclassical writers valued clarity and precision in language. They favored a polished and elegant writing style, free from the extravagance and ornamentation of the preceding Baroque period.

Satire: Satire was a prominent genre in Neoclassical literature. Writers used satire to criticize social, political, and moral issues of their time. Jonathan Swift's "Gulliver's Travels" is a notable example.

Poetic Forms: Neoclassical poetry adhered to strict poetic forms, such as the heroic couplet and the ode. These forms emphasized order and symmetry, with a focus on balanced lines and regular meter.

Themes of Rationalism and Enlightenment: Neoclassical literature reflected the intellectual currents of the Enlightenment, promoting rationalism, skepticism, and scientific inquiry. Writers engaged with contemporary debates on religion, politics, and philosophy.

Prominence of Essay Writing: The essay emerged as a popular literary form during the Neoclassical period. Essayists like Joseph Addison and Richard Steele contributed to the development of the periodical essay, offering social commentary and moral reflections.

Imitation of Classical Models: Neoclassical writers often looked to classical models, such as the works of Homer, Virgil, and Horace, for inspiration. They aimed to emulate the style and structure of classical literature, incorporating elements such as clear language, rational argumentation, and adherence to established literary forms like the epic, ode, and satire.

Didacticism: Neoclassical literature frequently had a moral or didactic purpose. Writers used their works to teach moral lessons, promote virtue, and criticize societal vices. Satire, in particular, was a popular genre for conveying moral messages through humor and irony.

Classicism in Drama: Neoclassical drama, influenced by Aristotle's Poetics, emphasized the unity of time, place, and action. Plays were often written in a five-act structure, with a focus on character development and moral dilemmas. French Neoclassical playwrights like Jean Racine and Pierre Corneille were particularly influential in this regard.

Rejection of the Supernatural and Romanticism: Unlike the Romantic writers who followed them, Neoclassical writers tended to reject the supernatural, the fantastical, and the irrational. They favored realism and rationality in their portrayal of human experiences and emotions.

Political and Social Context: Neoclassical literature often reflected the political and social values of the time, including an emphasis on order, hierarchy, and authority. Writers frequently celebrated the virtues of monarchy and aristocracy while critiquing democratic movements and social upheaval.

Overall, Neoclassical literature represented a deliberate return to the classical ideals of clarity, order, and rationality, setting the stage for the literary movements that would follow in the centuries to come.

14.4 WRITERS OF NEO CLASSICAL LITERATURE

Neoclassical literature, which emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries, was characterized by a revival of classical themes, a focus on reason, order, and clarity, and an emphasis on form and structure. Some important writers of neoclassical literature include:

14.4.1 Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

Alexander Pope (1688–1744) was one of the most renowned English poets of the 18th century, celebrated for his wit, satire, and mastery of the heroic couplet. He was born on May 21, 1688, in London, England, to Catholic parents. He suffered from various health problems throughout his life, including a form of tuberculosis which stunted his growth and led to him being only about four and a half feet tall.

His Works:

"An Essay on Criticism" (1711) was one of his earliest major works, showcasing his keen understanding of literary criticism and his skill with the heroic couplet.

"The Rape of the Lock" (1712): A mock-heroic poem satirizing the frivolity of high society, particularly focusing on a trivial incident involving the cutting of a lady's hair.

"The Dunciad" (1728): A satirical poem where Pope lashes out against the writers and critics whom he deemed to be intellectually inferior, celebrating ignorance and dullness.

"An Essay on Man" (1733–1734): A philosophical poem exploring the nature of humanity, God, and the universe, written in heroic couplets.

"The Moral Essays" (1731–1735): A series of four epistles addressed to various individuals, covering a wide range of moral and social issues.

"The Iliad" and "The Odyssey" Translations (1715–1726): Pope's translations of Homer's epic poems are considered masterpieces of English literature, despite some liberties taken with the text for the sake of poetic expression.

Pope's works had a profound influence on subsequent generations of poets, including Samuel Johnson, William Wordsworth, and Alexander Pushkin. His skillful use of satire and his mastery of poetic form solidified his place as one of the greatest poets in the English language. Despite his physical limitations and the societal challenges he faced as a Catholic in England, Pope's literary achievements endure as a testament to his genius.

14.4.2 Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)

Jonathan Swift was an Anglo-Irish satirist, essayist, political pamphleteer, and poet, best known for his works "Gulliver's Travels" and "A Modest Proposal." Born on November 30, 1667, in Dublin, Ireland, Swift spent much of his adult life in England. He was born to English parents in Dublin, but he considered himself primarily English. He attended Trinity College in Dublin, where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1686. After graduating, Swift worked as a secretary to Sir William Temple, a diplomat and writer, from 1689 to 1699. During this time, he began writing essays and poems, gaining recognition for his wit and satire.

"A Tale of a Tub" (1704): This work is a satire on the excesses and abuses of religion and learning. It established Swift as a powerful satirist.

"Gulliver's Travels" (1726): Swift's most famous work, "Gulliver's Travels," is a satirical novel in which Lemuel Gulliver travels to several imaginary lands, each representing different aspects of human nature and society. It's a classic of English literature and a sharp critique of politics, society, and human behavior.

"A Modest Proposal" (1729): In this essay, Swift suggests that the impoverished Irish might ease their economic troubles by selling their children as food for rich gentlemen and ladies. It's a biting satire on the indifference of the ruling class to the plight of the poor.

"The Drapier's Letters" (1724-1725): A series of pamphlets in which Swift, writing under a pseudonym, protested against the imposition of a new coinage on Ireland by the British government.

14.4.3 Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) was one of the most influential figures of the 18th century in England, known primarily for his contributions to literature, criticism, and lexicography. He was born on September 18, 1709, in Lichfield, Staffordshire, England, to middle-class parents. He suffered from various health issues, including scrofula, which left him partially blind in one eye and deaf in one ear. He attended Pembroke College, Oxford, but financial constraints forced him to leave without a degree. Despite this, he was a voracious reader and developed a keen intellect.

Johnson's literary career began with his poem "London" (1738), which gained him recognition. He also wrote essays, poems, and works of criticism. His most famous work is "A Dictionary of the English Language" (1755), a monumental undertaking that took him nearly nine years to complete.

Critical Works: Johnson's critical essays, collected in works such as "The Rambler" (1750–1752) and "The Idler" (1758–1760), were highly esteemed for their moral and philosophical insights. He also wrote "The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets" (1779–1781), a series of biographies of notable poets.

Plays and Fiction: Johnson wrote several plays, including "Irene" (1749), which was not successful. His novel "The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia" (1759) is considered one of the earliest English novels and explores themes of human nature and the pursuit of happiness.

Samuel Johnson's life and works epitomize the intellectual and literary achievements of the Enlightenment period in England.

14.4.4 Voltaire (1694-1778)

Voltaire, a French writer whose works embodied the neoclassical spirit of reason, Voltaire is known for his essays, plays, and philosophical works. His satire, wit, and advocacy for freedom of thought align with neoclassical principles.

14.4.5 Molière (1622-1673)

Although he predates the full emergence of neoclassicism, Molière's comedies, such as "Tartuffe" and "The Misanthrope," exhibit neoclassical characteristics through their adherence to the unities, moral purpose, and social satire.

14.4.6 Jean Racine (1639-1699)

Jean Racine, a French playwright known for his tragedies, Racine's works, including "Phèdre" and "Andromaque," exemplify neoclassical principles of unity of time, place, and action, as well as emotional restraint and clarity of language.

These writers, among others, helped define and shape the neoclassical literary movement, leaving a lasting impact on literature and criticism during their time and beyond.

14.5 LET'S US SUM UP

In this Unit we have discussed certain topics that will be helpful in approaching the Neo classical age and literature. We have given you:

- a detail introduction to Neo classical age.
- an idea to understand the origin and development of Neo classical age.
- an outline of chief characteristics of Neo classical period.
- a detail discussion on major writers of Neo classical period.
- a brief guidelines on how to read classical literature.

14.6 QUESTIONS

1. How did the principles of Neoclassicism influence literature during the Neo-Classical Age?

2. What were the major socio-political events that shaped Neoclassical literature?

3. Analyze the significance of satire in Neoclassical literature as a tool for social commentary and criticism.

4. How did the Neo-Classical Age contribute to the development of the novel as a literary form?

5. Compare and contrast the poetry of Alexander Pope and John Dryden, focusing on their stylistic differences and thematic concerns within the Neoclassical framework.

6. Evaluate the impact of the Enlightenment on Neoclassical literature, particularly in terms of the emphasis on reason, empiricism, and skepticism.

7. Examine the role of literary clubs, societies, and salons in fostering Neo classical literary culture and intellectual discourse.

8. How did Neo classical literature reflect and respond to the changing socio-economic landscape of the period, including the rise of the middle class and commercialization of culture?

9. Investigate the portrayal of morality and ethics in Neoclassical literature, and how it reflects the values of the time.

10. Evaluate the role of women writers in Neo classical literature, considering their contributions to the literary canon and their engagement with contemporary social issues

B.SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. What defines the Neo-Classical Age in literature?

The Neo-Classical Age, also known as the Age of Reason, spans roughly from the late 17th century to the end of the 18th century. It emphasizes reason, order, and logic in literature and art, drawing inspiration from classical Greek and Roman works.

2. Who were some prominent authors of the Neo-Classical Age?

Some prominent authors include John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, Samuel Johnson, and Daniel Defoe.

3. What were the major literary forms and genres during the Neo-Classical Age?

The major literary forms included poetry, essays, satire, and the novel. Neoclassical writers focused on clarity, order, and structure in their works.

4.What were the key themes of Neo-Classical literature?

Themes of order, reason, morality, satire, and social criticism were prevalent in Neo-Classical literature. Writers often used their works to comment on societal norms and values.

5. How did Neo-Classical literature differ from the preceding Renaissance literature?

Neo-Classical literature differed from Renaissance literature in its emphasis on reason and order over emotion and individualism. While Renaissance writers celebrated humanism and individual creativity, Neo-Classical writers valued rationality and adhered to classical principles of form and structure.

6. What were some notable characteristics of Neo-Classical poetry?

Neo-Classical poetry typically exhibited formal structures such as the heroic couplet, strict adherence to meter and rhyme, clarity of expression, and a focus on didacticism and moral instruction.

7. What was the significance of satire in Neo-Classical literature?

Satire was a powerful tool used by Neo-Classical writers to critique societal flaws, corruption, and hypocrisy. Authors like Jonathan Swift employed satire to expose and ridicule the vices of their time.

8. How did the rise of the novel impact Neo-Classical literature?

The rise of the novel during the Neo-Classical Age marked a departure from traditional forms of literature. Novelists like Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson introduced new narrative techniques and explored themes of social realism and individual experience.

9. How did the Neo-Classical Age influence later literary movements?

The Neo-Classical Age laid the foundation for subsequent literary movements such as Romanticism and Realism. While later movements rejected some of the rigid formalism of Neo-Classicism, they retained its emphasis on clarity, reason, and social critique.

10.What role did literary criticism play in the Neo-Classical Age?

Literary criticism flourished during the Neo-Classical Age, with writers like John Dryden and Samuel Johnson producing influential works of criticism. Critics sought to establish rules and standards for literature, advocating for clarity, decorum, and adherence to classical models.

14.7 FURTHER READINGS

Mundra. S.C. *A Compendious History of English Literature*. Prakash Book Depot. Bareilly

Tilak, Dr. Raghukul. *History of English Literature*. Rajhans Publication,

Trivedi, R. D. *A Compendious History of English Literature*. Vikash Publishing House. New Delhi. 1976

UNIT 15 PERIODICAL ESSAYS AND ESSAYISTS

Structure

15.0   OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss the development of Periodical Essay. In addition to this, we shall also discuss the intellectual, social and political reasons that influenced Periodical Essay and gave a certain direction to its subsequent development. After reading this Unit carefully, you will be able to:

- Understand the main trends in Periodical Essay.
- Describe the reasons in the development of Periodical Essay.
- Discuss the historical background of the Periodical Essay in English.

15.1   INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to begin to read Periodical Essay from its initial point of development with historical background.   Some major Periodical essay publications are discussed with their themes and characteristics. It is only then that we will be able to experience the literature in its different dimensions: as 'literature' as well as 'historical background. Do go through all the sections and answer the questions given in 'Check Your Progress'. This will help you to remember what you have read and also give you some practice in expressing yourself in your own words. We do hope you enjoy working through this Unit.

15.2   PERIODICAL ESSAY: LITERARY APPROACH

A periodical essay is a type of literary composition that was popular in the 18th century, particularly in England. It typically appeared in newspapers, magazines, or journals and was characterized by its informal tone, varied subject matter, and reflection on contemporary society. The periodical essay often featured commentary on politics, social customs, literature, and other aspects of daily life. The introduction to a periodical essay would typically set the tone for the piece and introduce the themes or topics that the author intended to explore. It might also establish the author's perspective or voice, which could range from witty and satirical to earnest and moralizing, depending on the writer's style and intentions. An effective introduction to a periodical essay might begin with a captivating anecdote, a provocative question, or a bold assertion to engage the reader's interest. It could also provide some context about the publication in which the essay appeared or the cultural milieu in which it was written.

The periodical essay typically revolves around the exploration of various topics relevant to society, culture, politics, and human nature. It often combines elements of humor, satire, wit, and moral instruction. These essays were usually published in newspapers, magazines, or journals on a regular basis, such as weekly or monthly. The basic theme of the periodical essay can vary widely depending on the writer and the publication, but some common themes include:

Social Commentary: Periodical essays often offer commentary on social norms, customs, and behaviors of the time. Writers may critique or satirize societal trends, manners, and attitudes.

Moral Instruction: Many periodical essays aim to impart moral lessons or advice to readers. Writers may use anecdotes, allegories, or personal reflections to convey ethical principles and values.

Character Sketches: Some periodical essays focus on portraying different types of characters, often with humor or satire. These character sketches may highlight the quirks, flaws, or virtues of individuals within society.

Reflections on Human Nature: Writers of periodical essays often ponder the complexities of human nature, exploring topics such as love, friendship, ambition, greed, and jealousy. They may offer insights into the motivations and behaviors of people.

Political Commentary: Periodical essays frequently engage with political issues and events of the time. Writers may express their opinions on government policies, political leaders, or broader political ideologies.

Literary Criticism: Some periodical essays discuss literature, offering critiques of contemporary works or reflections on literary trends and movements.

Overall, the periodical essay serves as a vehicle for writers to engage with their readership on a wide range of topics, providing entertainment, enlightenment, and sometimes provocation along the way. Periodical essay serves to orient the reader to the content and tone of the piece while enticing them to continue reading and engage with the author's ideas.

15.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF PERIODICAL ESSAY

Periodical essays were a popular form of literature during the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly in England. They were characterized by several key features:

Periodicity: As the name suggests, periodical essays were published regularly in newspapers, magazines, or journals. They often appeared weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly, providing readers with consistent content.

Informal Tone: Unlike formal essays, periodical essays were written in a conversational and often humorous tone. They aimed to entertain and engage readers, often employing wit, satire, and irony.

Wide Range of Topics: Periodical essays covered a wide range of topics, including politics, society, manners, literature, morality, and everyday life. Writers would often address current events and social issues of their time, providing commentary and critique.

Character Sketches: Many periodical essays featured character sketches, where writers would create fictional characters to represent different social types or personalities. These characters would often serve as vehicles for satire and social commentary.

Reflection on Human Nature: Periodical essays often reflected on human nature, exploring topics such as ambition, vanity, love, friendship, and folly. Writers would draw insights from their observations of society and individuals, offering moral lessons and reflections on the human condition.

Episodic Structure: Periodical essays were typically divided into separate installments or episodes, each focusing on a particular theme or topic. This episodic structure allowed writers to explore diverse subjects over time while maintaining reader interest.

Authorial Persona: Writers of periodical essays often adopted distinct authorial personas or pseudonyms, such as "The Spectator" or "The Tatler," which became associated with specific publications. These personas helped establish the tone and style of the essays and created a sense of continuity for readers.

Overall, periodical essays played a significant role in shaping public opinion and cultural discourse during their time, providing readers with both entertainment and enlightenment.

15.4 ESSAYISTS OF PERIODICAL GENRE

The periodical essay, a form of essay writing that flourished in the 18th century, saw the emergence of several important essayists who contributed significantly to its development. These essayists often wrote for popular periodicals or magazines of the time, addressing various social, cultural, and political issues. Some of the key figures in the periodical essay tradition include:

15.4.1 Joseph Addison (1672–1719)

Joseph Addison, along with his friend Richard Steele, Addison is considered one of the pioneers of the periodical essay. He contributed to The Tatler and The Spectator, where his essays covered a wide range of topics including manners, morals, and society. His writing style was elegant and polished, influencing many subsequent essayists. ." "The Tatler" was a British literary and society journal that was published for two years, from 1709 to 1711. It was one of the earliest examples of the English periodical and is considered a precursor to later periodicals like "The Spectator," which Addison and Steele would go on to co-create.

Addison and Steele collaborated closely on "The Tatler," with Steele often serving as the primary author and Addison contributing essays as well. The publication was issued three times a week, and its format included a single, one-sheet folio, allowing for quick and easy consumption by its readers. "The Tatler" covered a wide range of topics, including literature, politics, society, and manners. It featured fictional characters and personas through which the authors explored various aspects of contemporary life and human nature. One of the most famous of these characters was Isaac Bickerstaff, who served as the fictitious editor of the journal. The tone of "The Tatler" was often lighthearted and humorous, yet it also contained moral and social commentary. Addison and Steele used the publication to promote civility, moderation, and rationality, reflecting the values of the English Enlightenment

The Spectator" was a daily periodical published in London by Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele from 1711 to 1712. It was revived later in 1714 for a short time. The publication played a significant role in the development of English literature and journalism, influencing subsequent generations of writers and thinkers. His essays in "The Spectator" were characterized by their wit, clarity, and moral earnestness. The periodical aimed to entertain and educate the emerging middle-class readership of London. It covered a wide range of topics, including literature, politics, society, and manners.

In addition to his work on "The Spectator," Addison also contributed to other periodicals, including "The Tatler" and "The Guardian." He also wrote plays, poetry, and critical essays, further establishing his reputation as one of the leading literary figures of his time.Top of Form

15.4.2 Richard Steele (1672–1729)

Steele was a close collaborator of Addison and co-founded The Tatler and The Spectator with him. His essays often focused on contemporary society and manners, and like Addison, he contributed significantly to the development of English prose style. ichard Steele was an influential periodical essayist in 18th-century England, best known for co-founding and contributing to the literary magazine "The Tatler" and later "The Spectator." Born in 1672, Steele was a prolific writer, playwright, and politician, but it is his work in journalism that earned him enduring acclaim.

In April 1709, Steele launched "The Tatler" along with his friend Joseph Addison. It was a thrice-weekly publication that covered various topics such as society, literature, politics, and manners. Steele wrote under the pseudonym "Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq." and used the persona to comment on contemporary issues with wit and satire. His essays were characterized by their conversational tone, moral instruction, and humorous observations of daily life.

In 1711, Steele collaborated with Addison again to create "The Spectator," a daily publication that continued the style and themes of "The Tatler." Like its predecessor, "The Spectator" featured essays on a wide range of subjects, aiming to educate and entertain its readers. Steele's contributions to both publications played a significant role in shaping the genre of the periodical essay and influencing the development of English literature. Steele's essays often championed moderation, virtue, and civility, reflecting the values of the Enlightenment era. Through his writing, he sought to improve society by promoting rational discourse and moral introspection. Despite facing challenges such as political controversy and financial difficulties, Steele remained dedicated to his journalistic endeavors, leaving a lasting legacy as one of the most important figures in the history of English literature

15.4.3 Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)

Johnson is best known for his monumental work, A Dictionary of the English Language. He also made significant contributions to periodical essays. His essays in The Rambler and The Idler cover a wide range of topics, displaying his wit, moral insight, and literary prowess. "The Rambler" is a series of essays written by Samuel Johnson, first published in 1750. Johnson, often regarded as one of the greatest literary figures of the 18th century, was a prominent English writer, critic, and lexicographer.

The Rambler" essays were published twice a week from 1750 to 1752, totaling 208 essays in all. Johnson wrote under the pen name "The Rambler" and covered a wide range of topics, including morality, literature, society, and human nature. The essays were intended to entertain, educate, and provoke thought among their readers. Johnson's writing in "The Rambler" is characterized by its moral earnestness, eloquence, and wit. The essays often offer insightful observations on the human condition and provide valuable commentary on the social and cultural landscape of Johnson's time. "The Rambler" is considered a significant contribution to English literature and remains widely studied and admired for its literary merit and philosophical depth.

"The Idler" was a series of essays written by Samuel Johnson, one of the most influential literary figures of the 18th century. The essays were published in a weekly journal called "The Universal Chronicle" from 1758 to 1760, and then collected and republished in two volumes in 1761. Johnson wrote most of the essays himself, but he also collaborated with his friend and fellow writer, Sir Joshua Reynolds, on a few of them. The essays in "The Idler" cover a wide range of topics, including literature, morality, society, and everyday life. Johnson's writing style is characterized by wit, wisdom, and a keen insight into human nature. He often uses satire and irony to critique the social and cultural norms of his time. "The Idler" was not as popular or well-known as Johnson's other major work, "The Rambler," but it still remains an important part of his literary legacy. It offers valuable insights into Johnson's thoughts on a variety of subjects and provides a fascinating glimpse into the intellectual life of 18th-century England

15.4.4 Daniel Defoe (1660–1731)

While primarily known for his novels, such as Robinson Crusoe, Defoe also wrote numerous essays for periodicals like The Review. His essays often dealt with political and social issues of his time, showcasing his keen observation and analytical skills. "The Review" was a newspaper that ran from 1704 to 1713, and it was published tri-weekly. It primarily focused on political and social commentary, often espousing Defoe's own views and opinions. The publication covered a wide range of topics, including current events, literature, and economics. Defoe used "The Review" as a platform to express his political beliefs and advocate for various causes he supported.

While "The Review" is not strictly a periodical essay in the traditional sense, it does contain elements of the genre, as it presented thoughtful commentary and analysis on contemporary issues. Defoe's writing in "The Review" is often characterized by its wit, intelligence, and sharp insights into the political landscape of his time.

These essayists, among others, played a crucial role in shaping the periodical essay genre, which served as a vehicle for social commentary, moral instruction, and literary entertainment during the 18th century. Their works continue to be studied and appreciated for their insights into the culture and society of their time.

15.5 LET'S US SUM UP

In this Unit we have discussed certain topics that will be helpful in approaching the Periodical Essay. We have given you:

- a detail introduction to Periodical Essay.
- an idea to understand the origin and development Periodical Essay.
- an outline of chief characteristics of Periodical Essay .
- a detail discussion on major writers of this genre.
- a brief guidelines on how to read Periodical Essay .

15.6 QUESTIONS

1. What were the key characteristics and themes of the periodical essay genre during the 18th century, and how did it contribute to the literary landscape of that era?

2. Discuss the socio-political context that gave rise to the popularity of periodical essays in the 18th century, focusing on how they reflected and influenced contemporary society.

3. Analyze the role of prominent periodical essayists such as Joseph Addison and Richard Steele in shaping public opinion and cultural norms of their time.

4. Compare and contrast the styles, themes, and philosophies of different essayists within the periodical essay tradition, such as Samuel Johnson, Jonathan Swift, and Daniel Defoe.

5. Evaluate the impact of periodical essays on the development of English prose style and rhetoric, considering their influence on subsequent generations of writers.

6. Investigate the circulation and readership of periodical essays, including the role of coffeehouses, literary societies, and print culture in disseminating these texts to a wide audience.

7. Examine the relationship between periodical essays and other forms of literary expression in the 18th century, such as the novel, poetry, and drama, noting points of intersection and divergence.

8. Trace the evolution of the periodical essay genre beyond the 18th century, exploring its legacy in subsequent literary movements and its adaptation to changing cultural and technological contexts.

9. Investigate the editorial practices and publication strategies employed by periodical essayists and publishers, including the use of pseudonyms, serialization, and reader feedback..

10. Examine the role of humor, satire, and irony in periodical essays, considering how these rhetorical devices were used to critique societal norms and expose human folly.

15.7 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 16 RISE OF NOVEL AND IMPORTANT NOVELISTS

Structure

16.0   Objectives

16.1   Introduction

16.2   Origin and Development of novel: Literary Approach

16.3   Types of English Novel

      16.3.1 Gothic Novel

      16.3.2 Picaresque Novel

      16.3.3 Regional Novel

      16.3.4 Domestic Novel

      16.3.5 Realistic Novel

      16.3.6 Classic Novel

      16.3.7 Romantic Novel

      16.3.8 Mystery/ Thriller Novel

      16.3.9 Science-fiction (sci-fi) Novel

      16.3.10 Fantasy Novel

      16.3.11 Historical Novel

      16.3.12 Literary Fiction

      16.3.13 Young-Adult (AV) Novel

16.4   Important Novelists of English Literature

      16.4.1 Daniel Defoe

      16.4.2 Samuel Richardson

16.0   OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss the rise and development of English Novel. In addition to this, we shall also discuss the intellectual, social and political reasons that influenced English novel and gave a certain direction to its subsequent development. After reading this Unit carefully, you will be able to:

- Understand the origin, rise and development of English Novel.
- Describe the reasons in the development of English Novel.
- Discuss the historical background of the rise and development of English Novel.   .

16.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to begin to read the development of English Novel from its initial point of development with historical background. Some major novelist and novels are discussed with their themes and characteristics. It is only then that we will be able to experience the literature in its different dimensions: as 'literature' as well as 'historical background. Do go through all the sections and answer the questions given in 'Check Your Progress'. This will help you to remember what you have read and also

give you some practice in expressing yourself in your own words. We do hope you enjoy working through this Unit.

16.2 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF NOVEL: LITERARY APPROACH

The English novel has a rich and varied history, evolving over centuries through various literary movements and cultural shifts. An English novel is a literary work of fiction written in the English language. It typically follows a narrative structure, featuring characters, plot, setting, and themes. English novels can encompass a wide range of genres, including romance, mystery, science fiction, historical fiction, and more. Some famous English novels include "Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austen, "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee, "1984" by George Orwell, and "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" by J.K. Rowling. The English novel has its roots in earlier forms of prose fiction, such as romances, allegories, and picaresque tales. One of the earliest examples of English prose fiction is Thomas Malory's "Le Morte d'Arthur" (1485), a compilation of Arthurian legends. However, it wasn't until the 17th century that the novel as a distinct literary form began to emerge. The term novel is derived from the Italian novella which literally means 'a little new thing'. Most of the European languages have the term roman which is an equivalent term for novel. The novel portrays the life of middle-class and working classmen and women by focusing on their diverse social and private activities. Usually love, marriage, travel, problems related to socio-economic conditions form the theme of novel. The novelist raises certain issues by inventing characters and situations in his work. But it should not be construed that these are the only characteristics of this form of writing, because it has got a tremendous variety in type, form and subject-matter.

Although the term novel, as is professed by R.J. Rees, meant a short story of the kind written and collected by Boccaccio (1313-75) in his Decameron until the seventeenth century, it got its present meaning by about 1700. Rosalynde by Thomas Lodge (1558-1625) and Arcadia by Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) were written in the fashion of the pastoral romance of the Ancient Greek writers. The novel as a literary form fully appeared in its present form in the eighteenth century.

16.3 TYPES OF ENGLISH NOVEL

English novels encompass a vast array of genres and styles, catering to diverse tastes and preferences. Here are some common types of English novels:

16.3.1 Gothic Novel

It shall be appropriate to have a fair understanding of the term Gothic in order to know what a Gothic Novel actually is. In fact, the word 'Gothic' originally referred to the Goths, a Germanic tribe. Later on it signified 'Germanic' and 'Medieval'. In modern times, the term has numerous meanings. In literature, Gothic Novel, as defined by Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch, is a type of novel characterized by mystery, horror, and the supernatural, often with haunted castles, secret passage-ways, grisly' visions, all the paraphernalia of the tale of terror. Gothic novel or fiction became very popular from the 1760s onwards until the 1820s. According to J.A. Cuddon, it has had a considerable influence on fiction and is of much importance in the evolution of the ghost story and the horror story.

Tobias Smollett's Ferdinand Count Fathom (1753) is believed to be probably the first example of the Gothic fiction. It introduced terror and cruelty as its main theme. The Castle of Otranto (1764) by Horace Walpole is regarded as the original Gothic Novel. The novel was set in the 12th and 13th centuries, and had a gruesome tale of bloodshed, passion and villainy. Its popularity was immense. It had had no fewer than 115 editions since its first publication. The novel is definitely a seminal work because it had a tremendous influence on the development of the literary form called 'Gothic Novel. The main features of the Gothic Novel are as follows:

(a) It is a tale of mystery and horror. It is purposely written to chill the spine and curdle the blood.

(b) There is the presence of a story element of the supernatural.

(c) It is set in wild and desolate landscape, dark forests, ruined abbeys, feudal halls and medieval castles.

(d) Monstrous apparitions often make their horrifying presence in a Gothic novel.

(e) The atmosphere is surcharged with gloom and doom.

16.3.2 Picaresque Novel

The Picaresque novel is the tale of a hard worked travelling hero, knocking at the doors of the great, mixing with rogues and thieves, languishing in person, or on board the ship, suffering every vicissitude good or bad. In fact, the word 'Picaresque' is derived from the Spanish word 'Picaro' which is equivalent to the English word 'rogue' or 'knave' in its connotation. In this way, speaking simply, Picaresque novel is a novel that deals with the adventures of rogues and villains. According to The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory (Fourth Edition), the Picaresque novel "tells the life of a knave or picaroon who is the servant of several masters. Through his experience this picaroon satirizes, the society in which he lives."

The origin of the Picaresque novel is traced back to 16th century Spain. It flourished and flowered rapidly. Matio Aleman, the writer of Guzman de Alfarache (1599- 1604), and Francisco Quevedo, the author of La Vida del Buscon (1626) were the two most famous writers of picaresque novels. It is to be noted that these two books were widely read all over Europe. As for England, the term first came into circulation in the 19th century. Sir Walter Scott used the term when, writing in 1829, he expressed his opinion about the Memoirs of Vidoqu. He described this work as a pickaresque tale... a romance of roguery. Thomas Nashe's (1567-1601) The Unfortunate Traveller, or the Life of Jack Wmton, published in 1594, is unanimously acknowledged as the first picaresque romance in English. Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) comes next to Nashe as for the popularity of the genre is concerned. His *Moll Flanders*, published in 1722, is a highly celebrated picaresque novel. Defoe had an enormous influence on the evolution of the English novel. After Defoe, Fielding (1707-54) enriched the treasure of the genre. His Jonathan Wild (1743) and Tom Jones (1749) are widely popular as picaresque novels: T.G. Smollett's (1721-71) Roderick Random (1748) is another example of the genre. The genre spread to America also. Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn and Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* are described as modern American picaresque novels. Some of the important features commonly to be found in the picaresque novel are:

(a) The principal character in the picaresque novel is usually a low born rogue who lives by his or her wits. He becomes involved in one predicament after another as an unavoidable rule. He is without roots with no fixed abode.

(b) The picaresque novel takes the form of a series of loosely connected episodes which are usually arranged as journeys.

(c) It is often but not always autobiographical.

(d) There is a touch of realism in the treatment of the subject matter of a picaresque novel

16.3.3 Regional Novel
The regional novel is one of the most attractive novel forms not only in English literature but also in the literatures of other major languages. The regional novels came into fashion as a consequence of the novelists' wish to be realistic. The elements of familiarity and verisimilitude were present there in the novel form from the earlier days. It is said that Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) was the most noteworthy regional novelist among the earliest practitionrs of the genre. She was an Anglo-Irish woman. Credit goes to her to see for the first time the possibilities of relating characters to a particular environment. She used the regional material for the subject matter of her novels. Castle Rackrent (1800), Belinda (1801) and The

Absentee (1812) are her most important novels which stand as testimony to her uniqueness as a regional novelist. Maria Edgeworth's Castle Rackrent is regarded by many learned critics as the first fully developed and true regional novel in English. Here, it would be appropriate to recall the names of four great English regional novelists: Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), Arnold Bennett (1867-1931), D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930) and William Faulkner (1897-1962). These novelists made invaluable contribution to the development of the regional novel. Of these, Thomas Hardy deserves special mention. His novels are set in a fictive Wessex where we may perceive an appreciation of both aesthetic and geographical aspects of landscape. The Wessex landscape is almost as important in Hardy's novels as the human characters. Some of the famous novels of Thomas Hardy are: Under the Greenwood Tree (1872), Far from the Madding Crowd (1874). The Return of the Native (1878), The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886). Some special features of the regional novel are given below:

(a) The regional novel usually describes people and landscape of an actual locality outside the metropolis, but it may be set in a town or city as per the demand of the story.

(b) The regional novelist describes in great detail the local customs, traditions, mores, dress and manners of the people in order to bring authenticity to his fictional world.

(c) The regional novelist recreates the geographical region or locality by reordering his material.

(d) A regional novel undertakes a journey from microcosm to macrocosm.

(e) The local regional elements are presented in such a way by the author that they wear the ring of universal and general about them.

(f) The characters in the regional novel are generally deeply married to their environment. They are the true sons of the soil.

The regional novel, thus, is one of the most important genres of fiction. Its tremendous growth has been possible only due to the reader's response. It is hoped, the genre shall see new horizons in the coming years.

16.3.4 Domestic Novel

This form of novel is about upper middle or middle class life and characters. As the term suggests the domestic novel is based on family situations and problems. The novelists of this form derive their subject matter from the issues related with domestic life to be commonly found in societies of the world. In English, the fiction of Jane Austen or Emily Bronte may be cited for the illustration of such novels called domestic novels. Jane Austen (1775-1817) wrote a number of interesting domestic novels such as Sense and Sensibility (1811), Pride and Prejudice (1813), Mansfield Park (1814), Emma (1816), Northanger Abbey (1818) and Persuasion (1818). These novels were well received by the public because they

mirrored the domestic life with much authenticity. Pride and Prejudice is based on the life of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet who live with their five daughters at Longbourn in Hertfordshire. Elizabeth Bennet, the heroine of this novel, was regarded by Jane Austen as her favorite among all her heroines.

In short, A regional novel typically refers to a work of fiction that is set in a particular geographical region and often focuses on the customs, dialects, history, and social structures of that specific area. These novels delve into the unique characteristics and issues of the region, often portraying the landscape and environment as integral elements of the story. Authors of regional novels aim to capture the essence of a place and its people, offering insights into their way of life and cultural identity.

16.3.5 Realistic Novel

The term is applicable to such novels as present an accurate imitation of life as we perceive it in our day-to-day world. The realistic novel makes an autoerotic delineation of character. It portrays every day experiences in their most sordid actuality. In England Daniel Defoe is regarded as the first realist novelist who appropriated the domain of his fiction through the training of a journalist and a pamphleteer. He had the special gift of being authentic in his narratives. Robinson Crusoe (1719) and Moll Flanders (1722) are two of his highly celebrated works. Captain Singleton (1720). In short, a realistic novel typically focuses on portraying life as it is, without fantastical elements or exaggerated drama. This novel aims to provide a poignant and authentic portrayal of everyday life, inviting readers to empathize.

16.3.6 Classic Novel

These are enduring works of literature typically written in the 19th and early 20th centuries. They often explore timeless themes and are considered foundational in the development of the novel as an art form. Examples include "Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austen, "Great Expectations" by Charles Dickens, and "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee.

16.3.7 Romance Novel

Romance novels focus on romantic relationships as the central plot element. They can vary widely in setting, tone, and subgenre, including historical romance, contemporary romance, and paranormal romance. Examples include "Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austen and "Outlander" by Diana Gabaldon.

16.3.8 Mystery/Thriller Novel

Mystery and thriller novels are characterized by suspense, intrigue, and the solving of a central mystery or the thwarting of a threat. They often feature detectives, investigators, or ordinary individuals caught up in extraordinary circumstances. Examples include "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" by Stieg Larsson and "The Da Vinci Code" by Dan Brown.

16.3.9 Science Fiction (Sci-Fi) Novel

Science fiction novels explore speculative concepts, futuristic technologies, and alternative realities. They often extrapolate current scientific and technological trends to imagine possible futures. Examples include "Dune" by Frank Herbert and "Neuromancer" by William Gibson.

16.3.10 Fantasy Novel

Fantasy novels feature magical or supernatural elements, often set in imaginary worlds with their own rules and mythologies. They frequently involve epic quests, battles between good and evil, and the hero's journey. Examples include "The Lord of the Rings" by J.R.R. Tolkien and "Harry Potter" series by J.K. Rowling.

16.3.11 Historical Novel

Historical novels are set in the past and often seek to recreate the historical period with accuracy while weaving fictional narratives within it. They provide insights into different cultures, events, and societal norms of bygone eras. Examples include "Wolf Hall" by Hilary Mantel and "The Book Thief" by Markus Zusak.

16.3.12 Literary Fiction

Literary fiction focuses on the quality of writing and the exploration of complex themes and characters. These novels often defy categorization and can incorporate elements from various genres. They are typically characterized by rich prose and deep psychological insight. Examples include "The Catcher in the Rye" by J.D. Salinger and "Beloved" by Toni Morrison.

16.3.13 Young Adult (Ya) Novel

Young adult novels are targeted towards adolescent readers and often feature protagonists of similar age. They cover a wide range of genres and themes, including romance, fantasy, dystopia, and coming-of-age stories. Examples include "The Hunger Games" by Suzanne Collins and "The Fault in Our Stars" by John Green.

These are just a few examples, and many novels blur the lines between genres or incorporate elements from multiple categories. The beauty of the English novel lies in its diversity and capacity to capture the imagination of readers across the globe.

16.4 IMPORTANT NOVELIST OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

The 18th century is often considered the "golden age" of the English novel, marked by the rise of the novel as a popular form of entertainment and artistic expression. Key figures during this period include Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding.

16.4.1 Daniel Defoe

Daniel Defoe (1660 – 1731) was an English writer, journalist, and pamphleteer, best known for his novel "Robinson Crusoe" (1719), which is one of the earliest examples of the English novel. Defoe is considered one of the founders of the English novel due to his contributions to the form and structure of the genre. Apart from "Robinson Crusoe," Defoe wrote numerous other works, including "Moll Flanders" (1722), "A Journal of the Plague Year" (1722), and "Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress" (1724). He was a prolific writer, producing over 500 works in his lifetime, covering various genres such as fiction, journalism, political tracts, and travel literature. Defoe's writing often explored themes of individualism, survival, and human nature. He had a keen eye for social observation and a gift for realistic detail, which made his works highly influential in the development of the English novel. Defoe's legacy continues to be celebrated in English literature, with his works still being widely read and studied today.

16.4.2 Samuel Richardson

Samuel Richardson (1740-1761) was an English writer and printer, best known for his epistolary novels, particularly "Pamela" (1740) and "Clarissa" (1748). Born in 1689, Richardson was the son of a joiner and a shopkeeper. He began his career as an apprentice to a printer and later established his own printing business. Richardson's literary fame arose with the publication of "Pamela," which tells the story of a young servant girl resisting the advances of her employer. The novel was groundbreaking in its form, as it was composed entirely of letters written by the characters, a style known as epistolary fiction. "Clarissa," his next major work, is an even longer and more complex epistolary novel that explores themes of virtue, morality, and the position of women in society. Richardson's novels were highly influential in the development of the English novel as a genre. They were praised for their psychological depth, moral seriousness, and realistic portrayal of characters and social situations. However, they also faced criticism for their sentimentalism and perceived lack of literary refinement. Aside from his literary pursuits, Richardson was also involved in various social and business activities. He served as Master of the Stationers' Company and was appointed printer of the Journals of the House of Commons, among other roles. He passed away in 1761, leaving behind a significant literary legacy that continues to be studied and appreciated today.

16.4.3 Henry Fielding

Henry Fielding was an English novelist and dramatist born on April 22, 1707, and passed away on October 8, 1754. He is best known for his novel "Tom Jones," which is considered one of the greatest comic novels in English literature. Fielding also wrote other notable works such as "Joseph Andrews" and

"Amelia." Apart from being a novelist, he was a prominent playwright and magistrate. Fielding's works often satirized the social and political issues of his time, and he played a significant role in the development of the English novel. Additionally, he is credited with establishing the legal framework for London's first police force, the Bow Street Runners.

16.4.4 Jane Austen

Jane Austen, the renowned English novelist, is celebrated for her keen observations of social dynamics, wit, and character development in her novels, particularly those set in the Regency era. Born on December 16, 1775, in Steventon, Hampshire, England, Austen was the seventh of eight children in a close-knit family. Her literary career began in her early teens, as she wrote humorous stories and plays for her family's entertainment. Austen's works often explore the lives of the English landed gentry, focusing on themes such as love, marriage, class, and morality. Her novels include "Sense and Sensibility" (1811), "Pride and Prejudice" (1813), "Mansfield Park" (1814), "Emma" (1815), "Northanger Abbey" (1817), and "Persuasion" (1817). These novels are characterized by their insightful social commentary, rich characterizations, and sparkling dialogue. Despite her literary achievements, Austen initially published her novels anonymously, and they were well-received but not widely known during her lifetime. It was not until after her death on July 18, 1817, that her brother revealed her authorship, and her works gained increasing popularity in the 19th century.

Today, Jane Austen's novels are regarded as classics of English literature, and her influence extends to various forms of media, including film, television, and literature. Adaptations of her works continue to captivate audiences worldwide, demonstrating the enduring appeal of her timeless stories and characters.

16.4.5 Mary Shelley

Mary Shelley was an English novelist best known for her Gothic novel "Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus," which was published anonymously in 1818. She was born Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin on August 30, 1797, in London, England. Her parents were the philosopher William Godwin and the feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft. Tragically, her mother died shortly after her birth. Her most famous work, "Frankenstein," is often considered one of the earliest examples of science fiction. The story follows Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist who creates a grotesque creature in an unorthodox scientific experiment. The novel explores themes such as the consequences of scientific ambition, the nature of humanity, and the pursuit of knowledge.

Aside from "Frankenstein," Shelley wrote other novels, including "The Last Man," "Mathilda," and "The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck." She also edited and published the works of her husband, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, after his death. Her life was marked by personal tragedy, including the deaths of several of her children and her husband. Despite these hardships, she continued to write and left a significant legacy in English literature. She passed away on February 1, 1851, in London, at the age of 53.

16.4.6 Sir Walter Scott

Walter Scott was a Scottish novelist, poet, historian, and biographer who lived from 1771 to 1832. He is often considered the inventor of the historical novel and is best known for his series of novels collectively called the "Waverley Novels." These novels, set in Scotland during various historical periods, include works such as "Ivanhoe," "Rob Roy," "The Heart of Midlothian," and "Waverley" among others. His writing style and his ability to vividly depict historical settings and characters have had a lasting impact on literature. His works were immensely popular during his lifetime and have continued to be influential in the development of historical fiction. Additionally, Scott played a significant role in the romanticization of Scottish history and culture, which had a lasting impact on Scottish identity and national pride.

16.4.7 Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens was an influential English writer and social critic of the 19th century, best known for his vivid characters, engaging storytelling, and keen observations of social injustices. He was born on February 7, 1812, in Portsmouth, England, and his works continue to be widely read and studied today. Some of Dickens's most famous works include "Oliver Twist," "David Copperfield," "Great Expectations," "A Tale of Two Cities," and "Bleak House." His novels often depicted the struggles of the poor and the working class in Victorian England, highlighting the harsh realities of life during that time period. He was not only a prolific novelist but also a skilled public speaker and performer, often giving readings of his own works to large audiences. His writing style was characterized by richly detailed descriptions, memorable characters, and a strong sense of social justice. Throughout his life, Dickens was a champion of various social causes, including education reform, prison reform, and the plight of the poor. His novels often drew attention to the injustices and inequalities present in Victorian society, and his writings played a significant role in raising awareness and inspiring social change. He passed away on June 9, 1870, but his legacy lives on through his timeless works, which continue to be read, studied, and adapted into various forms of media around the world.

16.4.8 Brontë Sisters:

Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre" (1847) and Emily Brontë's "Wuthering Heights" (1847) are enduring classics that explore themes of love, passion, and social class.

16.4.9 Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf was a pioneering English writer, known for her modernist novels, essays, and diaries. She was born on January 25, 1882, and passed away on March 28, 1941. Woolf was a central figure in the Bloomsbury Group, a circle of intellectuals and artists who played a significant role in British literary and artistic culture in the early 20th century. Her most famous works include "Mrs. Dalloway" (1925), "To the Lighthouse" (1927), and "Orlando" (1928). Woolf's writing is celebrated for its innovative narrative techniques, stream of consciousness, and exploration of themes such as gender, sexuality, mental illness, and the complexities of human consciousness. Despite struggling with mental health issues throughout her life, Woolf made significant contributions to literature and remains a prominent figure in the literary canon. Her works continue to be studied and appreciated for their literary experimentation and profound insights into the human condition.

16.4.10 James Joyce

James Joyce was an influential Irish writer known for his innovative and complex writing style. He is perhaps best known for his groundbreaking work, "Ulysses," which is considered one of the greatest novels of the 20th century. Joyce was born on February 2, 1882, in Dublin, Ireland. He grew up in a middle-class Catholic family and was educated at Jesuit schools and later at University College Dublin. His experiences in Dublin and his Irish heritage heavily influenced his writing. "Ulysses," published in 1922, follows the experiences of Leopold Bloom over the course of a single day, June 16, 1904, in Dublin. The novel is celebrated for its experimental narrative style, stream-of-consciousness technique, and rich use of language. Its publication marked a significant moment in literary modernism. Joyce's earlier work, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" (1916), is a semi-autobiographical novel that explores the growth and development of a young Irishman named Stephen Dedalus. This novel also showcases Joyce's experimentation with language and form.

Another notable work by Joyce is "Dubliners" (1914), a collection of short stories that vividly portray the lives of ordinary Dubliners. The stories offer a poignant glimpse into the complexities of Irish society and culture at the turn of the 20th century. In short, Joyce's writing is characterized by its linguistic innovation, complex wordplay, and exploration of themes such as identity, religion, and the nature of

reality. Despite the challenges his work presents to readers, Joyce remains one of the most celebrated and studied writers in the English language.

16.4.11 Salman Rushdie

Salman Rushdie is a British-Indian novelist and essayist renowned for his literary works that often explore themes of identity, politics, and religion. He gained international fame with his novel "Midnight's Children," which won the Booker Prize in 1981 and was later awarded the Booker of Bookers Prize in 1993 and 2008. Rushdie is also famously known for his controversial novel "The Satanic Verses," which sparked protests and led to a fatwā issued against him by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Supreme Leader of Iran at the time, in 1989. Rushdie faced years of living under threat of assassination as a result.

Apart from his novels, Rushdie has penned numerous essays, non-fiction works, and children's books. He's been a prominent voice in discussions about free speech, censorship, and the role of literature in society. In recent years, he has continued to write fiction and engage in public speaking and activism on various social and political issues.

Overall, the English novel has undergone significant transformations over the centuries, reflecting the changing concerns, values, and aesthetic sensibilities of each era. Yet, it remains a vibrant and enduring literary form, continually adapting to new cultural and technological contexts.

16.5   LET'S US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed origin and developments of English noveland important novelist in English literature. We have given you:

     I.   origin and development of novel.
    II.   types of English novel.
    III.   important novelists and their works.
    IV.   a brief outline of the history of novel
    V.   impact of novel reflecting value and aesthetic sensibility of the era.
    VI.   a brief guideline on how to read an Essayist.

16.6 QUESTIONS

Long Answer Type Questions

1. What societal or cultural factors typically contribute to the periodic rise of novel genres or styles?

2. What distinguishes an "important" novelist from a merely popular one, and how does this distinction evolve over time?

3. Are there particular regions or countries where the rise of novelists is more pronounced during certain periods? What factors contribute to this phenomenon?

4. How do shifts in readership demographics affect the types of novels that gain prominence?

5. Can you trace any connections between political or social upheavals and the emergence of influential novelists?

6. What impact does critical acclaim have on the trajectory of a novelist's career, and how does this relate to their broader cultural significance?

7. Can you identify any common themes or motifs that tend to characterize periods marked by the rise of important novelists?

8. What role do literary critics and scholars play in shaping the canon of important novelists, and how has this influence evolved over time?

9. Can you identify any instances where the rise of a particular novelist or novel subgenre has sparked controversy or debate within literary circles or wider society?

10. How do factors such as globalization and multiculturalism impact the visibility and success of novelists from diverse backgrounds?

II.   Short Answer Type Questions

1. **What factors contribute to the periodic rise of novelists in literary history ?**

   The periodic rise of novelists is often influenced by cultural shifts, societal demands, technological advancements, and the emergence of new literary movements. Additionally, factors such as political climates, economic conditions, and individual talent play significant roles.

2. **How do novelists become recognized as important figures in literature ?**

   Novelists become recognized as important figures in literature through various means, including critical acclaim, awards and honors, popular reception, scholarly analysis, and their impact on subsequent generations of writers.

3. **Can you identify some examples of novelists who rose to prominence during specific periods in literary history ?**

   Certainly! During the Victorian era, novelists like Charles Dickens and George Eliot gained prominence for their social commentary and vivid characterizations. In the modernist period, figures such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf reshaped the form and style of the novel. More recently, writers like Salman Rushdie and Toni Morrison rose to prominence for their exploration of postcolonial themes and identities.

4. **What role does the publishing industry play in the rise of novelists ?**

   The publishing industry plays a crucial role in the rise of novelists by providing platforms for their work to reach a wider audience. Publishers often invest in marketing, distribution, and publicity efforts to promote the works of promising writers and established authors alike.

5. **How do novelists navigate the challenges of staying relevant in an ever-changing literary landscape ?**

   Novelists navigate the challenges of staying relevant by adapting to evolving literary trends, engaging with contemporary issues, experimenting with form and style, and connecting with readers through various platforms such as social media, book tours, and literary festivals.

6. **How do cultural and historical contexts shape the rise of novelists ?**

   Cultural and historical contexts shape the rise of novelists by influencing the themes they explore, the narratives they construct, and the reception of their work by readers and critics. Writers often draw inspiration from the social, political, and intellectual currents of their time.

7. **Are there any patterns or trends in the periodic rise of novelists throughout history ?**

   Patterns and trends in the periodic rise of novelists can vary depending on factors such as geography, language, and literary tradition. However, certain periods may witness the emergence of literary movements or schools of thought that give rise to notable figures who reshape the literary landscape.

8. **How do novelists contribute to the cultural and intellectual discourse of their time ?**

   Novelists contribute to the cultural and intellectual discourse of their time by offering insights into contemporary issues, challenging prevailing norms and beliefs, fostering empathy and understanding, and providing a platform for marginalized voices to be heard.

9. **What role does reader reception play in determining the importance of novelists ?**

   Reader reception plays a significant role in determining the importance of novelists, as the popularity and influence of their work are often measured by factors such as book sales, reviews, awards, and reader engagement. However, critical appraisal and scholarly analysis also contribute to the assessment of their literary merit.

16.7 FURTHER READINGS

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